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A

VINDICATION

OF THE

DIVINE INSPIRATION

OF

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

A

VINDICATION

OF THE

DIVINE INSPIRATION

OF

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,

AND OF THE

DOCTRINES CONTAINED IN THEM:

BEING AN ANSWER TO THE TWO PARTS

OF Mr. T. PAINE's

AGE OF REASON.

BY THOMAS SCOTT,

CHAPLAIN TO THE LOCK HOSPITAL.

Be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with meekneſs and fear. 1 PET. iii. 15.

For who is this uncircumciſed Philiſtine, that he ſhould defy the armies of the living God? 1 SAM. xvii. 26.

LONDON, PRINTED:

NEW-YORK, RE-PRINTED BY C. FORMAN, FOR C. DAVIS,
BOOK-SELLER, NO. 94, WATER-STREET.

—1797.—

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PREFACE.

AS *many anſwers have already been publiſhed to the two parts of* the Age of Reaſon; *this may perhaps be thought ſuperfluous: but whatever may be decided concerning the ground taken, and the method adopted in this publication; it will probably be admitted that a cheap, but ſufficient, anſwer to a book, which circulates widely among the lower orders, was ſtill wanting. Such an anſwer I have endeavoured to ſupply, according to the beſt of my ability.*

It may likewiſe be ſuppoſed, that I have availed myſelf of the labours of thoſe who have preceded me, in the anſwers returned to ſeveral of Mr. P's objections. I am not indeed very anxious on this head: for the friends of revelation, in ſuch a day

as

as this, ſhould readily combine in its defence. Yet in fact almoſt every point of conſequence was written for ſubſtance, as it is now publiſhed; before I ſaw moſt of the anſwers which have been already given. In ſeveral particulars I was happy to meet with a confirmation of my ſentiments; and in a few inſtances I adopted thoughts, which had not before occurred.

Mr. P's work conſiſts of two parts, but the ſecond is the moſt ſyſtematick attack upon the ſcriptures. Having therefore determined to form my anſwer into two books; I have in the firſt, followed him through the ſeveral diviſions of the old and new Teſtament, and anſwered his objections, in good meaſure according to the general order of his ſecond publication; but adverting to the former work, when the ſubject requires it, with proper references at the foot of the page. In the ſecond Book, I have anſwered his general objections, to Revelation, Miracles, Prophecy, the Canon of Scripture, Myſteries, and ſome other particulars: attempting to connect with theſe ſubjects, a compendious view both of the evidences and nature of our holy religion.

It may be deemed captious to object against the title of a book: yet 'The Age of Reason' is far more replete with wit and rhetorick, than sober discussion and solid argument. It is in fact an attempt to reduce Lord Shaftsbury's maxim to practice, and to make ridicule the test of truth; *except when acrimony preponderates. There is little difficulty in answering our author's* reasonings: *but his confident assertions, plausible declamations, and smart* repartees, *are exceedingly suited to impose on the understanding. Every reader should therefore pause from time to time; and, when he has been carried away with the author's eloquence or wit; he should ask himself, what argument it contains? In short, Mr. P. is the special pleader; and not the impartial judge, who sums up the evidence and decides accordingly.*

Mr. P. treats the answers given to the first part of his work, as 'cobwebs brushed away by accident.' But indeed hitherto most men have, in one way or other, been irreligious: and I am not so sanguine, as to hope to effect a sudden revolution. I fear numbers will side with the infidels, after all believers can do: but the recovery, or preservation, of a few individuals from the fatal contagion, will richly

richly repay my labours; though they likewiſe ſhould be counted a cobweb ſwept away by accident. On the other hand I have no fear, that the Bible and Teſtament will fall, *as Mr. P. ſeems to expect. The ſcriptures have ſtood many more formidable aſſaults than this, and will ſurvive all their opponents: but I fear, that multitudes will* fall *into temptation and a ſnare, and finally into deſtruction, by means of this extraordinary publication; and I would add my feeble efforts to counteract its pernicious tendency.*

Mr. P's ſincerity in hating the Bible, *was certainly proved by the ſatisfaction he felt, in the proſpect of death, from reflecting that he had finiſhed the firſt part of 'The Age of Reaſon!' But it would be deemed enthuſiaſm in a Chriſtian, to ſpeak of ſuch a circumſtance, as a proof that* his *principles were true.*

If Mr. P. and many others deem all prieſts cheats *or* dupes, *it does not follow, that they think thus of themſelves. And ſhould they be cenſured for paying the ſame attention to their credit, intereſt, or ſubſiſtence, which other men are allowed to do: yet,*

while

while they believe the Bible to be the word of God, they are bound in conſcience to defend it. And why ſhould they not be thought as competent, and as much authorized to write upon religion, as other men are upon their ſeveral profeſſions?

Whether Mr. P. underſtands the Bible or not, it does not become me to determine: but ſurely moſt of his opponents have ſtudied it far more than he has done; even by his own confeſſion. He, however defines infidelity *to conſiſt 'in profeſſing to believe what a man does not believe;' but I apprehend the Bible calls this* hypocriſy, *and gives a very different idea of* infidelity.* *Various contentions have ariſen about other ſubjects, as well as about the meaning of the ſcriptures. Politicians diſpute as warmly as theologians; yea republicans can be very fierce and cruel in contending about the Rights of Man. Yet after all men have rights, though they cannot agree about defining and ſecuring them.*

Mr. P. has ſaved himſelf, and his anſwerers much trouble, by attempting to make the Bible ſelo

* *P. i. p. 4.*

felo de se.* *Yet I find, by his quotations from several ancient and modern enemies of the gospel, that he would have availed himself of other weapons, if he had known where to have procured them: This, however, would have been very difficult, even to* men of learning and application: *and at last the testimonies of profane authors against the scriptures would not have been of great service to him, unless he could* positively prove *by them that the books, we call sacred, were forged in later times: and this we know to be impossible.—I shall only add, that I will endeavour to follow Mr. P's advice, and not to confound a dispute about the authenticity (or rather the divine inspiration) of the scriptures, 'with a dispute about doctrines!' And I shall not attempt to prove any thing from the scriptures, except the excellency of the religion contained in them; and the existence of prophecies, which have been most circumstantially accomplished.*

May 23, 1796.

* *In law, he that committeth felony by murder in himself.*

BOOK

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOOKS OF MOSES.

MR. PAINE undertakes to demonſtrate, that Moſes did not write thoſe books, which are aſcribed to him: and conſequently that they are deſtitute of authority. Now it may be ſaid, that they would not be deſtitute of authority, though Moſes did not write them: for they may be authentic records, even if penned by another author. I am not however, diſpoſed to concede this point: but having anſwered the objections of this confident antagoniſt, I ſhall give my reaſons for believing that Moſes wrote theſe books, *under the immediate ſuperintending inſpiration of the Holy Spirit.*

The arguments, by which Mr. P. endeavours to overturn the authority of theſe ancient books, are of two ſorts: ſome more directly tend to ſhew, that Moſes was not the author of them; and others to prove them unworthy of God; and thus fix a charge of impoſture on the writer, for delivering his doctrines and commands in the name of the Lord. I ſhall begin with the former.

I. It is alledged, that Moſes could not be the author of theſe books, becauſe they are generally penned in the third perſon. But Zenophon and Cæſar, admired writers among the Greeks and Romans, do the ſame, when recording their own actions: and what ſcholar ever queſtioned the authenticity of their works on that account? In Deuteronomy, however, Moſes ſpeaks principally in the firſt perſon; and Mr. P. ſeems to find great confuſion in the arrangement of that book, and ſays it is *dramatical*.* Whereas it is obvious, that the hiſtorian records facts in the third perſon, and delivers exhortations in the firſt: and the change of perſons, our objector mentions, are only pauſes of the ſpeaker, giving an account of the occaſion, on which each ſpeech was delivered, and of ſome coincident circumſtances. Mr. P. muſt therefore have ſtrange ideas of the *drama*, if he apply that term to a ſingle ſpeaker addreſſing the ſame audience, at different times, almoſt in the manner of a modern preacher!

No accurate ſtudent of the Bible need be informed, that the city *Laiſh* did not receive the name of *Dan*, till long after the death of Moſes.† Yet our author would find it difficult to prove that no ſuch place as Dan exiſted in the days of Abraham:‡ for this would require a perfect knowledge of all places then exiſting. Dan ſignifies *judgment*: and perhaps a city in thoſe parts might be ſo called, becauſe ſome perſon was ſtationed there

* P. ii. p. 7, 8. † Judg. xviii. 29. ‡ P. ii. p. 10—12. Gen. xiv. 14.

there to adminiſter juſtice. Admitting, however, that Laiſh was meant; no proof can be thence brought that Moſes did not write the book of Geneſis. Some tranſcriber, in after times, knowing that Laiſh was then commonly called Dan, might inſert this name as a note in a parentheſis, to render the hiſtory more intelligible: and this note might afterwards be continued inſtead of the text, either by miſtake, or with the ſame intent for which it was inſerted. Arguments muſt be ſcarce with infidels, when this ſingle word is brought forward with great parade and confidence, as if it contained full demonſtration, that the books of Moſes were anonymous impoſtures!

It may be proper to inform ſome of Mr. P's readers, that the *Bible* and the *Bible chronology* are entirely diſtinct: we contend that the former is the infallible word of God; we allow the latter to be the fallible calculations of learned men: But Mr. P. ſeems diſpoſed to conſider them both as originating from the ſame ſource.*

No doubt ſome parts of the xxxvi. of Geneſis were inſerted long after the death of Moſes:† and the caſe ſeems to have been thus. The compiler of the books of Chronicles abridged ſeveral genealogies from Geneſis; and he continued the liſt of names far beyond the times of Moſes, in the latter part of his firſt chapter. In conſequence of this ſome tranſcriber put theſe additions to the genealogies of the xxxvi. of Geneſis, where they have ſtood to this day.

It

* P. ii. p. 10.

† P. ii. p. 12—14.

It is truly ridiculous to bring forward this circumſtance, as if it were a new diſcovery! If any argument was intended to be founded upon it, Mr. P. ſhould have fairly met and confuted this method of removing the difficulty, and others of a ſimilar nature. Studious men were always aware of the objection, and have attempted to obviate it: but the Age of Reaſon has not ſhewn that any new ſolution is wanted.

Probably a few verſes in this chapter are not ſo old as Homer; and Mr. P's aſſiduity may perhaps diſcover a few more inſtances of the ſame kind: but inſtead of wondering, that ſuch trivial variations have taken place in theſe ancient records; we may well be aſtoniſhed they have been ſo well preſerved, that the moſt acute critics can diſcover no alteration, of any importance to our faith and practice.

Mr. P. has made the extraordinary diſcovery, that Zedekiah is mentioned in the ſecond book of Chronicles! And as he ſuppoſes this was written before the book of Geneſis, becauſe the verſes before mentioned were taken from the firſt book he concludes that Geneſis was not extant till after the captivity; and that the firſt book in the Bible was written three hundred years after Homer's Iliad.* As however, he ſeems elſewhere to allow, that David and Solomon wrote ſome part of the works aſcribed to them;† and they certainly did not live after the captivity; he muſt mean the *firſt book in order*; not the moſt *ancient book*, in the

* P. i. p. 32, 33. † P. ii. p. 40, 41.

the Bible. But, as he is oppoſing the general opinion, concerning the antiquity of the ſcriptures, he ſeems to wiſh his readers to underſtand his aſſertion of the moſt *ancient baok* in the Bible.

But will any man contend, on ſuch ſlight grounds, that the books of Moſes were penned after the captivity: when the whole religious ſyſtem and civil polity of the Jews, for nearly one thouſand years before, had been reſted on thoſe books; and all their other writers perpetually referred to them; as is manifeſt in the hiſtories, pſalms, and propheſies of the Old Teſtament? If men ſhould attempt to criticize in this manner on any claſſical author; the learned would be ready to conclude, that, inſtead of *the Age of Reaſon*, we were come to the *age of lunacy*.

But indeed we find in the books of Chronicles,* the line of David brought down four generations lower than the time of Zerubbabel: and if this too were written before Geneſis and the other books of Moſes; the Jews had not a written law till within about four hundred years before Chriſt! But at that time, the whole nation, by ſome unaccountable infatuation, was led to receive the work of an anonymous impoſtor, as ſacred books, which they and their fathers had always poſſeſſed, read, and obeyed, for above one thouſand years: or at leaſt, that they always ſuffered ſevere puniſhment, whenever they diſregarded or diſobeyed them!

Indeed Mr. P. does not ſeem to have made up his mind on the ſubject; or to have determined on

* 1 Chron. iii.

on the period, when he ſhall allow that the Jews were in actual poſſeſſion of the books of Moſes :* and I apprehend, it may ſafely be affirmed, that ſuch an explicit declaration would ſubvert his cauſe ; for it would be much eaſier to meet a direct charge, than vague and varying inſinuations on the ſubject.

Moſes might ſurely write, that " the children of Iſrael did eat manna, till they came to a land inhabited ; they did eat manna till they came to the borders of Canaan ;"† for he lived, till they had got poſſeſſion of the countries, which had been governed by Sihon and Og, and he died on the borders of Canaan. So that he might know the manna had not ceaſed at that time, and foreſee that it would ceaſe when they entered Canaan. Mr. P. therefore ſpeaks on this occaſion, with an ill grace, of the lies and contradictions of the Bible.‡ But his ingenious ſcheme for ſubſiſting about two millions of people for forty years, on a kind of muſhroon, will doubtleſs greatly amuſe many of his readers, and help to invalidate the divine authority of the ſcriptures.§

It is ſaid in the book of Numbers, " the man Moſes was meek above all men which were upon the face of the earth : ' therefore Moſes could not be the writer ; for to boaſt of meekneſs is the reverſe of humility, and a lie in ſentiment.' But meekneſs in this connection is oppoſed to an irascible diſpoſition ; and the meekneſs of Moſes is mentioned

* P. ii. p. 32, 33 † Exod. xvi. 35. ‡ P. ii. p. 17, 18. § P. ii. p. 16, 17.

mentioned as an aggravation of the offence committed by Aaron and Miriam, and a reaſon of the Lord's interpoſition to plead his cauſe againſt them.* To ſpeak truth of ourſelves is not always vain glorious boaſting; nay there are occaſions, on which a man may mention his own meekneſs and gentleneſs in conſiſtency with the deepeſt humility. Our Lord alſo ſaid, "I am meek and lowly in heart:" and, though infidels, who ſeem to think themſelves excluſively warranted to proclaim their own virtues, may deſpiſe this remark; yet Chriſtians will reverence the example; and not wonder, if Moſes, having impartially recorded his own faults, ſhould be led by the Holy Spirit to mention this excellency of his character.—Some indeed think, that a blameable lenity was intended; and others ſeem to admit, that the words were inſerted by another hand: but I ſee no occaſion to have recourſe to ſuch ſuppoſitions: for the readineſs with which Moſes forgave the offenders, and the earneſtneſs with which he prayed for Miriam, illuſtrate the account thus given of his own unaſſumed and gentle diſpoſition.

Mr. P. ſeems to think it ſelf-evident, that all which was written concerning giants muſt be fabulous; and conſequently that the Bible is a fable.† But men are now ſometimes ſeen above eight feet high, and proportionably large; and authentic hiſtories mention thoſe of a ſtill greater ſize. So that a well-atteſted relation of men, that were ten or twelve feet high, would not be incredible; for none

* Numb. xii. † P. ii. p. 17.

none of our reaſoning can ſhew this to be impoſſible. A bedſtead, ten feet four inches long, would not be much too large for ſome men now living; and ſomething may be allowed to the oſtentation of the king of Baſhan.* Even if Rabbah were never taken till the days of David, which cannot be proved: yet Moſes might know, that the Ammonites had ſeized upon the bedſtead of Og, or bought it of the Iſraelites, and reſerved it as a curioſity in their capital city. But ſuppoſe the paſſage in queſtion were added as a note many years afterwards: how does this invalidate the authenticity of the books of Moſes?

The fourth commandment, as it ſtands in the fifth of Deuteronomy, varies from the original law written in the twentieth of Exodus: hence it is inferred that the writer of theſe books received his materials from tradition, or invented them himſelf.† But impoſtors do not admit ſuch *apparent* inconſiſtencies, which may be avoided with very little trouble: ſo that they are rather proofs of the writer's conſcious integrity. In fact, Moſes, in a moſt impreſſive and pathetic exhortation did not confine himſelf to the words which he had recorded as an hiſtorian. The people knew very well the original ground for hallowing the ſabbath, in honor of the Creator: and he thought himſelf at liberty, to remind them of their obligations to Jehovah their Redeemer from Egyptian bondage; and the humanity due to their bond-ſervants; for this conſtituted another important reaſon for hallowing

* Deut. iii. 11. † P. ii. p. 9.

lowing the ſabbath. *Diſtinct* motives are not neceſſarily *inconſiſtent*. Mr. P. in writing his ſeveral pamphlets, might both aim at freeing mankind from vulgar prejudices, and obtaining celebrity to himſelf: yet he might deem it proper on ſome occaſions to inſiſt upon the one, and in different circumſtances he might bring forward the other, without being juſtly chargeable with inconſiſtency, or ſelf-contradiction.

If Mr. P. ſuppoſes, that Chriſtians believe Moſes to have written the account of his own death and burial, he muſt be ſurpriſingly credulous; and if he thinks, that they never endeavoured to account for the circumſtances of theſe events being recorded in the laſt chapter of Deuteronomy, his information muſt be very defective! Almoſt any one of thoſe expoſitors, againſt whom he declaims, though it is evident he never conſulted them, would have ſhewn him that theſe are no new diſcoveries, and that the difficulty ariſing from them is far from inſuperable. Perhaps Joſhua or Eleazer added this chapter, or it was taken from the authentic records of the nation at a later period; when, it is evident that the words, "no man knoweth his ſepulchre to this day," were ſubjoined. The preceding hiſtory plainly implies, that Moſes ſhould *die*, and not that he ſhould be *tranſlated*, as ſome ſuppoſe him to have been:* and the concluding chapter records the accompliſhment of theſe intimations. "Moſes died—according to

* Numb. xxvii. 13. Deut. iv. 21, 22. xxxi. 14, 16, 27. xxxii. 50.

the word of the Lord, and he buried him." Mr. P. cannot ſee the antecedent to *he* in this paſſage; it happens to be placed in the preceding verſe, and this is the only difficulty in the caſe!* If it be aſked, how it was known that the Lord buried Moſes? I anſwer by immediate revelation. A good reaſon may be aſſigned, why he ſhould be buried in this manner: namely, leſt the Iſraelites ſhould idolize his relics, as they did the brazen ſerpent, or as papiſts do the bones of the ſaints.—Mr. P's merriment on the occaſion, will doubtleſs give more pleaſure to many of his readers, than ſound argument would have done; but it deſerves and requires no anſwer.

II. We now proceed to conſider objections of another nature, and far more important: as they tend to prove the books of Moſes to be in all reſpects unworthy of God.—Mr. P.† finds great fault with the hiſtory of the creation. "It begins abruptly; it is nobody that ſpeaks; it is nobody that hears; it is addreſſed to nobody; it has neither firſt, nor ſecond, nor third perſon."—If this paſſage contains either reaſon or common ſenſe, my underſtanding is too obtuſe to diſcover it. But the ſacred writer relates facts, as hiſtorians generally do.—Firſt he addreſſes the reader, and then he introduces the Creator ſpeaking to the chaos, which promptly obeys his omnipotent commands. In what does this differ from the writings of other hiſtorians, except in ſimplicity and ſublimity? For even *infidels* of taſte, will doubtleſs coincide with

* Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6. † P. i. p. 15.

with the *pagan* Longinus, in admiring the hiſtory of the Creation, as inimitably beautiful; after all Mr. P's endeavours to ridicule it; and we need only compare the rational account of the creation, given by Moſes, with the whimſical abſurdities of the other *world-makers*, whom he mentions, to learn the difference between man's vain imaginations, and the ſure teſtimony of God.

Mr. P. attempts to burleſque the hiſtory of the fall, in order to prove that the books of Moſes are not authentic.* The reader muſt determine for himſelf, whether the ſacred writers borrowed their doctrine of the devil and his angels from the pagan mythology; or whether theſe fables were diſtorted traditions concerning the fall of angels, decorated by the ingenuity of the poets—The notion of Satan *warring* againſt the Almighty, who defeated him, is grounded on a paſſage in the Revelation of John:† which may *refer* to the fall of angels, and the oppoſition of fallen angels to the kingdom of Chriſt; but which directly *predicts* other events—This book indeed was written long after the fables of Jupiter and the giants, of Jupiter's caſting Vulcan out of heaven, and of Pluto's reigning in Tartarus, were invented; but the doctrine of fallen angels was publiſhed in the Old Teſtament many centuries before the date of theſe fables, and was doubtleſs known by tradition from the beginning.

But, however that may be decided, the Chriſtians certainly did not let Satan out of the pit, to introduce

* P. i. p. 10, 11, 46. p. ii. 14. † Rev. xii. 7, 8.

introduce him into Eden; unleſs Mr. P. can prove that Geneſis was forged by ſome Chriſtian writer, ſubſequent to the Revelation of John: and that the Jews then firſt received the old Teſtament from the very perſons, whom they moſt execrated and deſpiſed!

The doctrine of ſcripture on this ſubject muſt here be ſtated and vindicated.—God created multitudes of angels, and endued them with noble powers and faculties: but, as they were moral and accountable agents, ſome of them revolted from their Creator, incurred his diſpleaſure, loſt the divine image of holineſs, became malignant and deſperate, and, as determined enemies to him and his government, employed all their abilities in attempting to ruin his other creatures. Though "caſt down to hell, and bound in chains of darkneſs to the judgment of the great day," ſo that it is impoſſible for them to eſcape eternal condemnation; yet they are permitted, under certain limitations, for a ſeaſon, to ſhew their power and malice: as wicked men practiſe and proſper for a time. —Being united in one kingdom, under Satan or the devil, every thing they do is frequently attributed to their leader; as generals are ſaid to do thoſe things, which they perform by the troops under their command: ſo that omnipotence or omnipreſence is no more aſcribed perſonally to the devil, than to Alexander, or to General Jourdan. And it is a direct ſlander to affirm that 'Chriſtian divines give him a power equally great, or even greater, than they aſcribe to the Almighty.'—The penmen of ſcripture, never repreſent Satan, as 'de-

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feating the wiſdom and power of God;' but as *permitted* to try and prevail againſt our firſt parents, to tempt their poſterity, and to maintain his influence over wicked men, who are his willing ſervants: and even this will be over-ruled to the brighter diſplay of the Lord's glory, the great advantage of all his friends, and the deeper confuſion of Satan and his adherents.

The Lord created the parents of our race in his own image: but though perfectly holy, they were not unchangeable: for immutability is an incommunicable divine perfection. As a teſt of their obedience, they were forbidden to eat of the fruit of one tree, and warned, that in the day they ate of it they ſhould ſurely die. The tempter, however, concealing himſelf in the ſerpent, which is repreſented as a moſt beautiful and ſagacious animal before this tranſaction, prevailed by his inſinuations on Eve, and by her on Adam, preſumptuouſly to violate this ſingle eaſy reſtriction. Immediately they both became mortal, and their future lives reſembled a lingering execution. Their *ſpiritual* life, or the holy image of God, and capacity for happineſs in his ſervice and favor was alſo extinct; and they became prone to ſin, like the tempter to whom they had liſtened. And as they were created with immortal ſouls, the guilt they had contracted, with the crimes, which they would be continually adding, muſt have enſured their final miſery; had not mercy been vouchſafed through the promiſed ſeed of the woman.

Nothing

Nothing is eaſier than ridicule, to a man of a lively imagination, who is not reſtrained by any regard to piety or decorum. This tranſaction may be called, 'a *tete a tete* between the ſerpent and the woman;' 'the woman *in her longing* eating an apple: 'the ſnake perſuading her to eat an apple, and the eating of that apple damning all mankind.' But what is there in all this, except much profaneneſs, with very little wit, and no argument? Might not the Creator require ſome teſt of obedience and gratitude from his favored creature, and ſome condition of further bleſſings? Could any thing be more eaſy, than this ſingle inſtance of ſelf-denial among a profuſion of delights? And was not wilful and preſumptuous diſobedience, from unbelief, hard thoughts of God, ſenſual concupiſence, and ambition of independence, a moſt flagrant act of rebellion and ingratitude? They, who vindicate or palliate ſuch conduct, muſt have a very feeble ſenſe of their obligations to God, whatever they argue about moral obligations among men.—

But do all mankind deſerve damnation for Adam's ſin? I am not bound to anſwer this queſtion: and I would rather ſay, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God?" It is undeniable, that pain, ſorrow, and death exiſt, and that men are prone to wickedneſs in every age and country. The greateſt philoſophers can give no ſatisfactory account by what means the world was brought into its preſent deplorable condition; and the ſcripture narration, concerning the firſt entrance of ſin and death, is at leaſt as reaſonable as

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any hitherto deviſed. Now if Adam by tranſgreſſion became ſinful and mortal, his whole poſterity muſt fall *in* and *with* him; for every creature propagates its own nature, and all its eſſential properties. Accordingly children are liable to pain, ſickneſs, and death; and the ſtate of the world accords exactly to the ſentence denounced, when Adam ſinned.* Children ſhow alſo the ſame propenſities to pride, envy, ſenſuality, and other corrupt paſſions, as appear more ſtrongly marked in grown perſons. If then all men actually ſin and deſerve puniſhment; if they be incapable of a holy felicity in the enjoyment of God; and if there be a future ſtate of righteous retribution: they muſt be condemned in conſequence of Adam's ſin, unleſs mercy and grace deliver them. Would it not then better become us to leave theſe matters to a world of clearer light, and employ ourſelves in ſeeking mercy and victory over our evil propenſities, or in alleviating the miſeries of mankind, than in diſputing about what we do not underſtand, and ridiculing what we cannot diſprove? Could any man even *demonſtrate*, that the Moſaic account of the fall is groundleſs: juſt as much ſin and miſery would be found in the world, as there now is, unrepented ſin would ſurely expoſe men to the wrath of God. As to infants, who die without actually tranſgreſſing the divine law; we are not bound to determine any thing about them, but may ſafely leave them in the hands of infinite juſtice and mercy.

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* Gen. iii. 16—19.

We may not account for the circumſtance of Eve's not expreſſing wonder at the ſerpent's ſpeaking, by conſidering the brevity of the narrative, and the extraordinary ſagacity ſhe had before obſerved in that animal; and by ſuppoſing with great probability, that Satan aſcribed this gift beſtowed on the ſerpent, to the ſalutary tendency of the forbidden fruit.

Finally, let it be noted, that Mr. P. can clearly ſee the doctrine of evil ſpirits in the ſcriptures. So far he is right, and certainly underſtands the Bible better than ſome of his opponents. But as Satan's kingdom is the power of darkneſs, and as he carries on his deſigns moſt ſucceſsfully when leaſt ſuſpected; it is not impoſſible but Mr. P. may be indebted for many of his brilliant thoughts to Satan's ſuggeſtions, eſpecially 'ſuch as bolt into the mind of their own accord:'* and that Mr. P. may abundantly repay his obligations, even while he denies Satan's exiſtence, by endeavouring to ſet men againſt the religion of him, who "was manifeſted to deſtroy the works of the devil."

No particular objection is made, in the Age of Reaſon, to the hiſtory of the deluge; but it is ſaid, 'Take away from Geneſis the belief that Moſes was the author, on which only the ſtrange belief that it is the word of God hath ſtood, and nothing remains but an anonymous book of ſtories—abſurdities, or downright lies. The ſtory of Eve and the ſerpent, and of Noah and his ark, drops to a level with the Arabian tales, without the merit

* P. i. p. 43.

rit of being entertaining; and the account of men living to eight or nine hundred years becomes as fabulous as the immortality of the giants.' But is it not more wonderful, that God ſhould at all deſtroy the work of his own hands, than that he ſhould preſerve his creatures for many hundred years?—Many traditions among the heathen confirm the account of the deluge, and learned men have diſcerned traces of it all over the earth. The opinion of the divine inſpiration of the book of Geneſis is not ſupported, *only* or *principally*, by the opinion that Moſes wrote it, but reſts on other evidence. This deſpiſed book contains the moſt ſatisfactory account of the creation; the entrance of ſin; the origin of the nations diſperſed through the earth; and the hiſtory of remote ages, of any book at this day extant in the world. And I may add, that the ſtory of Joſeph, in the opinion of the moſt competent judges, is the moſt pathetic and intereſting that ever was related; though found in this jumble of unentertaining abſurdities!

Mr. P. has given a ſpecimen of his candour, meekneſs, and caution, in his obſervations on the conduct of Moſes and the Iſraelites, reſpecting the Midianitiſh women and children. His abuſive language requires no anſwer, and is not worth tranſcribing: but his plauſible arguments and eloquent declamations are ſuited to impreſs and miſlead the unweary.* The Lord prohibited the Iſraelites to aſſault or diſtreſs the Moabites and Ammonites, with whom the Midianites were intimately

 connected:

* P. ii. 14, 15. Numb. xxxi.

connected:* yet Balak, king of Moab, when they approached his land, inſtead of ſending ambaſſadors to deſire peace, or openly making war upon them, ſent for Balaam to curſe them. When the project did not anſwer, he followed Balaam's counſel, and, by means of the Midianitiſh women, ſeduced the Iſraelites into fornication, and then into idolatry, in order that they might provoke the Lord to curſe them. In this diabolical deſign he ſo far ſucceeded, that twenty-four thouſand of them were cut off by divine judgments in one day. Moſes was therefore commanded to avenge Iſrael on the Midianites, who ſeem to have been moſt criminal in this tranſaction. Twelve thouſand Iſraelites were ſent into the country of Moab and Midian, who were completely ſucceſsful in the expedition, and did not ſo much as loſe a ſingle man. This was the plundering excurſion Mr. P. ſpeaks of; and if Moſes had acted by his own authority, the war would have been as juſtifiable as almoſt any war can be.

But after the return of the detachment of the ſpoil and priſoners, Moſes ordered all the grown women to be put to death; and this excites moſt dreadful declamations. We allow that the *ſword of war* ſhould diſtinguiſh between armed opponents and thoſe who make no reſiſtance: but the *ſword of juſtice* knows no ſuch diſtinction. Deliberate inſidious temptation to ſin muſt appear, to all wiſe and virtuous men, the greateſt of injuries. The ſex of the culprit does not in other caſes excuſe guilt

*Deut. ii. 9—13.

guilt or exempt from puniſhment: and if the women in defiance of modeſty and decency, openly ſuffered themſelves to be hired by the princes and prieſts of Baal, to become proſtitutes to the Iſraelites, in order to promote idolatry, and to bring guilt and wrath upon the worſhippers of Jehovah; was it meet the tempters ſhould eſcape with impunity, while the tempted were ſeverely puniſhed? The project of thus ſeducing Iſrael was adjudged the national ſin of Midian and Moab: and was it proper the principal criminals ſhould eſcape? It was impoſſible for Moſes to know the individual tranſgreſſors; and the Lord commonly involves many in public calamities, who are not equally criminal: by his orders the virgins were mercifully ſpared, and the reſt were righteouſly puniſhed.

But Mr. P. ſays, that an order was given to debauch the daughters, as well as to ſlay the mothers; and he calculates, that thirty-two thouſand were thus conſigned to debauchery!—If he could *prove* this, he would have ſome ground for his indignant declamations; and an argument againſt the divine authority of the books of Moſes, far more cogent than any he has hitherto produced: for a holy God may juſtly condemn tranſgreſſors to death, but he cannot command them to violate his own righteous laws.—But where did Mr. P. learn, that the Iſraelites were even allowed to debauch their female ſlaves? The law of Moſes did not permit a man to *marry* a captive, without many delays and previous formalities: and if afterwards he divorced her, he was bound to ſet her at liber-

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ty, "becauſe he had humbled her."* As Mr. P. had objected to a law found in this ſame chapter, it is not obvious to ſuppoſe he had never noticed this merciful limitation, or really believed the Iſraelites debauched all their captives: he ſhould, however, have more maturely ſtudied his ſubject, before he had vented his indignation in ſo virulent a manner.—This at leaſt is certain, that the paſſage referred to, compared with other ſcriptures, implies nothing about debauching the female children, or even taking them as concubines; but merely of retaining them as ſlaves, educating them in their families, employing them in domeſtic ſervices; and either incorporating them by marriage as proſelytes with the Iſraelites, taking them under certain reſtrictions, as ſecondary wives, or marrying them to their men-ſervants; and they were undoubtedly required to treat their ſlaves with great equity and lenity, compared with the practice of other ages and nations.†

It cannot, however, be denied, that the male-children, as well as the grown children were conſigned to the ſlaughter; and was not this very dreadful? Certainly, and wicked too, if Moſes did it of his own mind, and to gratify his own paſſions. But this coincides with another ſubject, which I ſhall here, once for all, fully conſider: namely, the orders given and executed, reſpecting the extirpation of the Canaanites and Amalekites.

Every one, who is in the leaſt acquainted with logic, muſt perceive, that all who make theſe orders

* Deut. xxi. 10—14. † Exod. xxi. 20, 21. 26, 27.

ders an objection to the divine original of the Old Teſtament hiſtory, argue completely in a circle, and beg the queſtion. They aſſume as an indiſputable truth, that God could not give ſuch orders; they condemn Moſes and Joſhua for doing ſuch things without authority: and thence they refer that God could not ſpeak to mankind by ſuch wicked perſons. But ſhould they not firſt of all, *prove*, that the Judge of the world could not *juſtly* give theſe orders? Till this be done, all their inferences from a falſe or diſputed principle muſt be falſe or diſputable; and all their declamations, mere rhetorical arts of impoſing on the underſtanding by appealing to the paſſions.

A judge may condemn a criminal to die, and an executioner may take away his life, without murder or even injuſtice: yet if an unauthorized perſon ſhould put him to death, he would be a murderer. Man is ſurely accountable to his Maker, and wickedneſs merits puniſhment; the Supreme Judge may therefore inflict *deſerved* puniſhment in what manner he ſees good. According to the ſcripture, death is the execution of a righteous judgment denounced againſt men, as tranſgreſſors of the divine law: and a more rational account of our maladies and miſeries, and of the triumph of death over the whole human ſpecies, has not yet been given. If then ſinners die, becauſe God inflicts death as a part of their merited puniſhment —the juſtice is preciſely the ſame, whether the ſword or a diſeaſe fulfil the divine mandate. It is not more cruel or unjuſt to order a criminal to be guillotined, and to nominate an executioner,

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than to require him to drink poiſon.—If then the Canaanites were ſinners againſt the Lord exceedingly, and had filled up the meaſure of their crimes; who will ſay, that he might not juſtly have deſtroyed them by peſtilence, deluges, and earthquakes? Who will contend, that it would have been wicked in an angel to have executed the Creator's commiſſion in cutting them off, as the army of Sennacherib was ſlain? Why then might not the Lord ſelect a nation, and having ſealed their commiſſion by public miracles, require them to extirpate an abominable race of men from the face of the earth?

The ſame objection might be made, with equal validity, though not ſo plauſibly, againſt all the ways, by which God inflicts death upon mankind: ſo that infidels argue by conſequence againſt facts, which occur every day and hour all over the world! Nothing, therefore remains, but to deny that God inflicts diſeaſes and death; and by a ſpecies of practical atheiſm, to reſolve every thing into chance or neceſſity: to blaſpheme God as cruel and unjuſt: or elſe to allow that he may execute criminals in what way he ſees good. The divine commiſſion to Moſes and Joſhua muſt indeed be proved by other arguments: but theſe conſiderations completely invalidate the objection, and demonſtrate that God might *juſtly* give them ſuch orders: otherwiſe he could not *juſtly* execute vengeance in any way upon guilty nations. If it be urged, that famines, earthquakes, and peſtilences, while they occaſion as awful deſolations, do not ſo much contradict men's notions of God: it may be

be anſwered, that " the world by wiſdom knew not God :" and pagan deities, as characterized by Greek and Roman authors, prove men's notions in this reſpect too fallible or abſurd, to be in the leaſt depended on.

'But wherein could crying or ſmiling infants offend? To read without horror of their ſlaughter muſt undo every thing tender, ſympathizing or benevolent in our nature: and the ſacrifice I muſt make to believe the Bible, would be ſufficient to determine my choice.'—Unbelief is then the effect of *choice*, not unavoidable of error or ignorance. But who can read of the ravages made by a conflagration, the miſeries of famine and peſtilence, or the deſolations of an earthquake, without horror? Yet who diſbelieves a well atteſted narrative of ſuch events on that account? Or who, but an atheiſt, denies the juſtice of God in them?—The execution of criminals is calculated to excite horror, and not to gratify the finer feelings of benevolence: yet no declamations will convince a ſober man that they are in all caſes unneceſſary, or that all concerned in them are ſanguinary monſters. The objection properly ſhould be made, not to the puniſhment of crimes, but to the crimes that render ſuch ſeverities neceſſary.—The averſion, men feel, to the ſcriptural hiſtory in this reſpect, above all other records of miſery and bloodſhed, ariſes from its oppoſition to the ſelf-flattery of the human heart: for theſe awful executions militate againſt their palliating notions, concerning the evil of ſin, and the demerit of deſpiſing and rebelling againſt God.

No doubt every humane heart revolts from the idea of ſlaughtering infants; yet infants die by thouſands all over the world, with unſpeakably more anguiſh, than a ſpeedy undreaded death by the ſword would occaſion; and has not God the iſſues of life and death? Every man, who inherits an impaired eſtate, or a gouty conſtitution, ſenſibly feels, that children do not ſuffer in conſequence of the crimes committed by their parents. Thus parents are puniſhed in their children: and if the Lord ſees good to prepare the ſouls of dying infants for heaven, and to receive them to himſelf: though the ſmiling or crying babes were ſuppoſed to have been as ſpotleſs as angels, they will not charge God with injuſtice or cruelty on account of their premature death; let who will on earth preſume to arraign his conduct. I would not engage in any controverſy about theſe ſubjects at preſent: but ſet aſide the doctrine of original ſin, allow pain and death to be the appointment of God, and deny the future happineſs of infants dying without actual tranſgreſſion; and I could declaim againſt the ordinary conduct of providence in this reſpect, with as much vehemence and plauſibility, though not ſo much eloquence as Mr. P. does againſt the Bible; had I no more reverence for the works, than he has for the word of God.

But if ſome great and important ends were anſwered, by the peculiar method in which the Lord puniſhed the nations of Canaan: then the objection is not only removed, but the divine wiſdom is illuſtrated, and a preſumptive argument afforded in favor of theſe books, as a revelation from God—

God.——Who can deny that the world has been full of atrocious crimes in every age? Who will ſay, that it does not become the Ruler of the univerſe to take effectual methods, for the reſtraint of man's wickedneſs? If then, the Canaanites were addicted to abominable idolatries, and deteſtable luſts: if their altars reeked with human ſacrifices, and their religious worſhip was connected with the moſt ſhameful impurities, it muſt have been peculiarly worthy of God, to inflict vengeance on them in a way, as remarkable as their atrocious crimes; and ſuited to produce durable and extenſive effects on the ſurrounding nations. His powerful hand and awful juſtice would be made far more conſpicuous, and the difference between him and the idols of the heathen be rendered more manifeſt; in puniſhing them by the ſword of his worſhippers, than if he had deſolated the lands by earthquakes and inundations: for theſe are commonly aſcribed to natural cauſes, and God is forgotten even in the midſt of them. Thus the affecting ſolemnities of a public execution are generally deemed more conducive to the ends of good government than the concealed puniſhment of a criminal. But eſpecially theſe tranſactions were calculated to warn the Iſraelites themſelves, againſt the abominations, which they were commiſſioned to puniſh: and if they did not fully anſwer that purpoſe, we muſt impute it to the ſtrength of human depravity. The whole hiſtory throws immenſe light on the plan of divine government; it ſhows the malignity of ſin, and proves that it will be puniſhed far more ſeverely than we naturally ima-

gine: it teaches all, that reverence the Bible, to fear the wrath of God, and ſeek his mercy: and the beneficial effects of theſe temporary miſeries, on all ſucceeding ages and nations, exceed all calculation; while the whole number, that periſhed, bears no more proportion to the vaſt multitudes who have profited by their doom, than the few criminals who ſuffer under the mildeſt government, do to the nation that is thus preſerved in peace and good order.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullneſs of it." Surely then, he had a right to beſtow that proportion of it on his worſhippers, which the Canaanites had forfeited by their crimes! The Iſraelites did not come by ſtealth to take poſſeſſion of it, but long before had avowed their purpoſe, and the grant of it they received from Jehovah.

Thoſe of the inhabitants who ſubmitted were treated with clemency; and from theſe examples we may infer, that others might have been ſpared, had they not hardened their hearts in impenitence and defiance of God. Had the infants alone been preſerved, they muſt either have been retained in the moſt rigorous bondage, or lived to perpetuate the bloody conteſt. The women were in general as criminal as the men: and if there were exceptions to this rule, the righteous Judge would diſcriminate in another world between them and ſuch as were more deeply guilty, though national judgments, however executed, make not theſe exact diſtinctions.

If Iſrael, by theſe ſeverities, contracted a ferocious ſpirit, which they gratified on other occaſions,

ſions, they proportionably diſregarded the law given them, which required love to neighbours, ſtrangers and enemies; and, the caſe of the devoted Canaanites excepted, preſcribed rules for war, at leaſt as equitable and mild as thoſe of any heathen nation.* And it ſhould be noted that the juſt notions of modern times, and even thoſe of infidels reſpecting clemency towards enemies, originated not with the admired Greeks and Romans, but with Chriſtians, who learned them from the Scriptures: ſo that when Chriſtian princes were known in the world, more humane ſentiments on theſe ſubjects began to be adopted.

Mr. P. aſcribes the credit given to the Bible to the prejudices of education. But, though the public be little concerned about an obſcure individual, I feel impelled to declare, that I once was not much more diſpoſed to credit the ſcriptures than Mr. P. and having got rid of the ſhackles of education, was much flattered by my emancipation and ſuperior diſcernment. But twenty years, employed in diligently inveſtigating the evidences and contents of the Bible, have produced in me an unſhaken aſſurance that it is the Word of God.

Had Moſes, Joſhua, Samuel, or the Iſraelites, acted without commiſſion, in theſe military executions, they would have merited the ſevere language uſed concerning them: but the poſitive proofs, that they acted by the command of God, have not been, and never can be anſwered; and till

* Num. xx. 14—21. Deut. xx. 10—14.

till this be done, all objections from theſe ſeverities, which ſuppoſe them to be done by the will of man, are mere fallacies and ſophiſms.

The moſt remote ſhadow of a proof cannot be produced, that Moſes carried on war under pretence of religion. He made no proſelytes by the ſword: and neither he, nor any other perſon, mentioned with approbation in ſcripture, made war on any neighbouring nation becauſe they were idolaters. If any man pretend to draw the conduct of Moſes, in the caſe of Midian, or of Joſhua in that of the Canaanites, into precedent, let him work ſuch miracles and produce ſuch credentials as they did: till that be done, Mr. P. has my free conſent to pour forth againſt him that torrent of indignant reproach, which he hath groundleſsly beſtowed on ſome of the moſt excellent characters, that have ever appeared in the world.

Mr. P. ſpeaks of the law, which condemns the ſtubborn and rebellious ſon to be ſtoned,* in language which I ſhall not tranſcribe:† yet that law contained much wiſdom and mercy under its apparent ſeverity. The parents were the only proſecutors; and as both of them muſt concur, natural affection would effectually prevent the frequent execution of the penalty denounced; and indeed we do not read a ſingle inſtance of the kind, in the whole ſubſequent hiſtory. If, however, ſuch an extraordinary event at any time occurred, it would not fail to excite general attention, and to produce immenſe effects on the minds, both of parents and children: ſo that the ſolemn execution

* Deut. xxi. 18—21. † P. ii. p. 9.

tion of one incorrigible criminal would be a ſalutary warning to tens of thouſands. The very exiſtence of ſuch a law would increaſe the authority of parents, and give every energy to their admonitions, as well as fortify the minds of young perſons againſt the enticements of bad company, and other temptations. Thus it would powerfully tend to *prevent* wickedneſs—the great end propoſed by every wiſe legiſlator!

It would likewiſe be a perpetual monitor to parents, not improperly to indulge their children; to eſtabliſh their authority by ſalutary correction in their tender years; to watch over them, and give them good inſtructions; to check the firſt buddings of vice, to ſet them a good example, and to pray for them without ceaſing. Theſe muſt have been the effects of this law, on all who duly attended to it; and we may learn ſimilar leſſons from conſidering the ſpirit of the ſtatute, though it be now obſolete: for the law-giver is unchangeable.

The proſecution was not allowed merely for *ſtubbornneſs*, as Mr. P. inſinuates; but for *obſtinate perſevering rebellion againſt parental authority, contempt of correction, gluttony, and drunkenneſs*; crimes deſtructive to families and communities. Theſe offences muſt be ſo proved, as to induce the elders to condemn and execute the criminal: and their authority would ſecure every innocent perſon againſt the haſty rage, or the deliberate malice, of thoſe few parents, who were capable of ſuch deſperate wickedneſs, as the murder of their own children.—This law therefore, ſo harmleſs and beneficial in

its operations, yet ſo contrary to human policy, rather proves than invalidates the divine original of the book in which it is contained; though it does not at all coincide with modern notions, which ruſhing from one extreme to another, ſeem about to diſſolve all obligations to ſubmiſſion, either to human or divine authority.

Whether prieſts are fond of preaching from Deuteronomy or not, we know that our Lord anſwered all Satan's ſuggeſtions by quotations from it; and the tempter may therefore be ſuppoſed to have a peculiar diſlike to this book. The heart-ſearching God alone can *know*, whether the deſire of tythes, or the love of ſouls, excites the miniſter's diligence; but, after all Mr. P's ridicule of "the ox treading out the grain," ſuch miniſters, as anſwer the emblem of that moſt laborious, tractable, and uſeful animal, will certainly deſerve, and need not fear but they will receive a ſuitable proviſion, while the Lord has work for them, whatever may become of tythes and eſtabliſhments.

And now, what do all theſe objections againſt the books of Moſes amount to, when ſtripped of the wit, ridicule, and declamation, with which they are exhibited? The writer generally ſpeaks of himſelf in the third perſon: a very few inſtances occur, in which a trifling alteration has been made in the text, during a courſe of above 3000 years: an account of the death and burial of the author is ſubjoined; events are recorded which ſeem to us improbable, becauſe contrary to our general obſervation: actions were done, by the command

of

of God, which without that command would have been unjuſt; and laws are given, which do not coincide with modern notions, concerning government and parental authority. Theſe frivolous objections are called *demonſtrations;* and the author exclaims againſt Moſes, and againſt impoſtors and prieſts, with peculiar vehemence and acrimony. So different is the talent of a popular declaimer, from that of the ſober impartial enquirer after truth!

It now remains to ſtate briefly the grounds, on which we maintain the divine ſuperintending inſpiration of Moſes; and that he was the penman of the books that bear his name, with the exception of the very few paſſages that have been mentioned. The books in queſtion, though they do not expreſsly declare it, give plain intimations to that effect. "Moſes wrote all the words of the Lord—and he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people."* "And it came to paſs, that when Moſes had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, *until* they *were finiſhed*—He commanded the Levites, ſaying, take this book of the law, and put it in the ſides of the ark, that it may be a witneſs againſt thee."† Reference to the law, *written* by Moſes, is continually made in the ſubſequent books of ſcripture. The teſtimony of all antiquity, Jews and pagans, with that of the whole Chriſtian church, and their avowed enemies, the modern Jews, concur in aſcribing theſe books to Moſes; and

* Exod. xxiv. 4—7. † Deut. xxxi. 24—26.

and even this teſtimony, from time immemorial, requires ſomething more forcibly to invalidate it, than a few ſtale objections, which have been repeatedly anſwered. How could ſuch an unanimous opinion have prevailed in the world, if there had been no foundation for it? If it did not originate with the publication of theſe books, at what time could it have been introduced? Could the whole nation of Iſrael be perſuaded by an anonymous impoſtor, that they had for ages paſt been governed by laws, and converſant in hiſtories, which they had never before ſeen? If the rulers, and a large majority, from ſelfiſh motives, attempted ſuch a bare-faced impoſition, would not ſome opponents have riſen up, and two parties have been formed? However the minority had been run down at home, for a time, would not other ages have heard of it? And if ſome received theſe books as genuine, would not others have rejected them as ſpurious? In all other caſes, it would be deemed too late, for a man to attempt diſproving any books having been written by the perſon, whoſe names they had certainly borne for above two thouſand years, with almoſt the unanimous conſent of all mankind. Indeed it appears a childiſh conceit for any one to engage in ſuch an undertaking.

The hiſtory contained in theſe books is confirmed by the moſt ancient records of the pagan world, and even by the fables of the poets, and has every mark of authenticity. The view given in them of the perfections, works, and government of God, is in all reſpects moſt rational and ſublime;

and

and as much excels all that pagans have written on thoſe ſubjects, as the ſun out-ſhines a taper. The *moral* law, the ſum of which is, "love God with all thy heart, and love thy neighbour as thyſelf," is perfectly holy, juſt, and good; but no gentile ever gave ſuch a delineation of man's duty. The *judicial* laws will be found wiſe, equitable and beneficial, in proportion as they are conſidered attentively, and are well underſtood. The *ceremonial* inſtitutions were not only ordinances of divine worſhip, and barriers againſt idolatry, but evident types and ſhadows of good things to come; and as ſuch, a kind of prophecy, the exact accompliſhment of which is a full proof of their divine original.

The ſubject of miracles will be conſidered ſeparately; but it may here be obſerved, that thoſe ſaid to have been wrought by Moſes, were of ſuch a nature, that they could not be counterfeited: millions, both of friends and enemies, were appealed to as eye-witneſſes of them: and if they had not been actually performed by the perſon, who wrote the books in which they are recorded, when and how could it have been poſſible to perſuade the whole nation of Iſrael, that they and their forefathers had always believed them? And if they were wrought by Moſes, they prove both the authenticity, and divine inſpiration of his writings, for he continually declares, that he ſpake, wrote, and acted by divine authority.

The prophecies contained in theſe books, which have been exactly fulfilled, evince the ſame truth. Notwithſtanding Mr. P's ridicule, I ſtill venture to

maintain,

maintain, that the firſt promiſe, of the Seed of the woman, is a moſt aſtoniſhing prediction; not only of the crucifixion and triumphs of Chriſt, but of the perſecutions, ſupports and victories of the church in every ſucceeding age. The prophecy of Noah, concerning the deſcendants of Canaan, has received a moſt wonderful accompliſhment in the hiſtory of mankind to this preſent day. The bleſſings pronounced by Jacob on his ſons were evident predictions, verified by the event; eſpecially that of the ſceptre not departing from Judah till Shiloh came. Balaam's predictions have been wonderfully fulfilled, eſpecially in the dominion of the Macedonians and Romans over the countries, once poſſeſſed by the Aſſyrians and Hebrews. The ſtate of the Jews to this day is prophetically deſcribed in two remarkable paſſages.* But this ſubject too will hereafter be more particularly conſidered.

Finally the teſtimony of our Lord and his apoſtles, who always refer to theſe books, as written by Moſes, and as the *ſcriptures*, the *oracles of God*, the *law of* God, fully confirms them both as genuine, and as divinely inſpired; with all thoſe who duly reverence the teſtimony of Chriſt, and are not diſpoſed to prefer the diſcoveries or conjectures of modern learned men. For every evidence, that proves the truth of chriſtianity, confirms alſo the divine authority of the Old Teſtament in general, and of the books of Moſes in particular.

And now, what are all Mr. P's boaſted *demonſtrations*, that theſe books are ſpurious, compared with

* Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii.

with this body of evidence, thus compendiouſly ſtated, that they are genuine and divine? If the cauſe he pleads, had not more to recommend it to the hearts of ungodly men, than to the underſtanding of ſober diligent enquirers, no believer need trouble himſelf to anſwer him; but all thoſe (alas, how numerous are they) who are not willing to part with their ſins, and lead a godly life, wiſh to diſbelieve the ſcriptures, either wholly or in part; and I do not think, that any man ever thoroughly deſired to part with all his ſins, and to get rid of the Bible at the ſame time.

As Mr. P. has honored Moſes with a greater meaſure of attention, and perhaps more calumny, than any other of the ſacred writers, I have replied to him with greater copiouſneſs, than may be neceſſary in the ſequel.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

JOSHUA.

IN prefacing this book ſome years ſince, I obſerved, that, 'It is not certain who was the penman;—but it is probable that the ſubſtance of it was written by Joſhua; though ſeveral paſſages appear to have been added after his deceaſe; perhaps by Phinehas, or ſome other perſon, who was employed

employed in connecting the memorials that he left behind him.'* Of theſe the book of Jaſher ſeems to have conſtituted a part; or at leaſt additions were made to it in his time, if it were before begun; for it ſeems to have been a collection of records and poems, made at the time when the events happened. I cannot ſee, why Joſhua might not write of himſelf, that "his fame was noiſed through all that country." Horace was a man of great genius and good ſenſe; yet he publiſhed an ode in his life time, in which he glories, that his fame would be celebrated as long as the world endured, and doubtleſs Joſhua might have done the ſame, uncenſured, if he had not referred all the glory of his exploits to the Lord God of Iſrael. But why ſhould we ſeek for other precedents, when Mr. P's own pamphlets abound with caſes in point; in which he ſpeaks of his fame as celebrated on both ſides of the Atlantic; only he uſes the *firſt* inſtead of the *third* perſon!

No doubt part of this book was penned after the death of Joſhua, and of the elders which outlived him: and if Samuel, or ſome other prophet, compiled the whole book in its preſent form from the records of Iſrael, I ſee not how this deducts from its authenticity, or invalidates its divine authority. It is certainly very ancient: Joſhua wrote ſome part of it, in the book of the law of God, according to the teſtimony of the perſon that completed it, who thus alſo atteſts that the *written law* was extant in his days.† The book of Jaſher

* Family Bible. † Joſh. xxiii. 6. xxiv. 26.

Jaſher was appealed to for the truth of the facts recorded in it, which ſufficiently proves that ſuch memorials exiſted, and were well known, when it was publiſhed. The Jews have in every age conſidered it as an authentic part of their ſcriptures, and preſerved it with moſt ſcrupulous care. Joſhua is repeatedly mentioned with approbation in the New Teſtament; and the book is quoted in a manner, which both authenticates the hiſtory, and honors it as the word of God.* Thus it is proved to be authentic and divine, by all the evidence which eſtabliſhes the New Teſtament; and if we allow that it bears the name of Joſhua, becauſe it records his actions, not becauſe it was written by him: it may be inferred that it is anonymous, but not that it is deſtitute of authority.

Mr. P.† animadverts in a manner, that diſcovers a ſtate of mind remote from true philoſophy, as well as piety, on a paſſage in this book.‡ He aſſerts, that the ſtory and the chapter end together abruptly and without meaning: but if he had known or recollected, that the diviſion of the Bible into chapters is comparatively a modern arrangement, he would have found, that the ſtory is continued to the fifth verſe of the next chapter; and this would have blunted the *point* of his wit and humour. Joſhua, as commander of Iſrael, meditated an attack on Jericho; when one in human form, with a drawn ſword in his hand, accoſted him; declaring himſelf to be captain of the

* Joſh. i. 5. Heb. xiii. 5. † Note P. ii. p. 34, 35.
‡ Joſh. v. 13—15.

Lord's hoſt. Joſhua could not but know who this was, for he knew whoſe deputy he was, as the leader of the Lord's armies: he therefore fell on his face and worſhipped him, as one who waited to receive his orders. He was then directed, according to the cuſtoms of thoſe times, "to looſe his ſhoe from off his foot," as Moſes had done, when JEHOVAH appeared to him in the buſh; and he obeyed. 'And what then?' ſays Mr. P. 'Nothing; here ends the ſtory and the chapter too. Here ends the chapter, it is true, and I am ſorry ſo injudicious a diviſion was made: but the ſtory proceeds. The reader is firſt informed of the ſituation of Jericho; then the captain of the Lord's hoſt, now called JEHOVAH, promiſes to deliver Jericho into Joſhua's hands, and gives him directions in what manner to conduct the aſſault: and Joſhua, following thoſe directions, is completely ſucceſsful. The appearance of Jehovah in human form is not particular to this place;* and Mr. P. is not miſtaken, in condemning as idolatry the honor on this occaſion paid to him who appeared as man, if he were not alſo God. I ſhall however, leave the Socinians to anſwer him on their principles, for ſuch paſſages create no difficulties to thoſe who believe the doctrines of the Trinity, and of Chriſt's eternal Deity.

It might have been expected, that this champion of infidelity would ridicule the miracle of the ſun ſtanding ſtill at the command of Joſhua: but wit and humour are not arguments; and a deſcant on the

* Gen. xviii. xxxi. 24—30. Hoſ. xii. 3—5. John i. 18.

the ſublime and the ridiculous, does not prove the thing impoſſible. The actual ſuſpenſion of the earth's diurnal motion would be infinitely eaſier to omnipotence, than ſtopping a ſhip under ſail would be to the mariners: and if it was done gradually, it might occaſion no more difference to the inhabitants. We cannot reaſonably expect any authentic pagan hiſtory to confirm ſuch an ancient event; but ſome traces of it are ſuppoſed diſcoverable in Herodotus; and the fable of Phæton, for one day driving the chariot of the ſun with the confuſion he occaſioned, ſeems a plain intimation, that one day had occurred, unlike all that preceded or followed it. The ſuſpenſion of the earth's diurnal motion muſt make the moon alſo *appear* to ſtand ſtill; if viſible, as it often is in the day-time: and I apprehend it will be generally allowed, that if Joſhua had been introduced, ſpeaking in the language of the Newtonian philoſophy, the argument againſt the antiquity of the book would have been more plauſible than it now is. Should any deny that God could work ſuch a miracle, it is ſufficient to anſwer, "Ye do err, not knowing the power of God." If they ſay, that he would not on ſuch an occaſion, I enquire, "who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counſellor?" The victories of Joſhua were evidently typical of thoſe obtained by Chriſt over the enemies of his people: and why ſhould it be thought incredible, that the Lord ſhould ſhew in this manner, that all creatures will concur in promoting the deſtruction of thoſe, who will not ſubmit to the dominion of his incarnate Son?

JUDGES.

JUDGES.

Mr. P. ſuppoſes that this book and that of Joſhua were penned by the ſame unknown author, becauſe they begin with the ſame two words! If this was *reaſoning* inſtead of *trifling*, it would prove nothing againſt their authenticity. This book is referred to in the New Teſtament, as a part of the Jewiſh ſcriptures:* if then we can prove the divine inſpiration of the New Teſtament, we ſhall alſo prove, that though *anonymous*, it is not without authority. Probably it was compiled from the records of the times by Samuel, or under his inſpection. The writer of this book expreſsly aſſerts that Jeruſalem had been taken by Judah, before Adoni-bezek was brought thither.† Mr. P. as expreſsly contradicts him!‡ It appears from ſeveral paſſages, that Judah had taken and burned Jeruſalem; but that the Jebuſites kept poſſeſſion of ſome part of it, probably the hill of Zion; and that they were not expelled till the time of David.§ If, however it could be proved, that the book of Judges was written in the reign of David, I ſee no reaſon on that account to doubt of its authenticity. Mr. P. ſuppoſes it to have been written about that time: yet this was more than five hundred years before the date he aſſigns to the book of Geneſis! It is readily admitted, that there is ſome difficulty, in the chronology of the Judges; yet learned men

* Acts xiii. 20. Heb. xi. 32. † Judg. i. 4—8 ‡ P. ii. p. 22, 23. § Joſh. xv. 63. Judg. i. 1—3. 21. 2 Sam. v.

men have been able to ſettle that matter with tolerable clearneſs. But how a difficulty of this kind, in a ſingle book of ſuch high antiquity, can 'prove the uncertain and fabulous ſtate of the Bible, does not appear to men of common capacity.'*

R U T H.

Mr. P. thinks this book a bungling ſtory; but very good judges have thought otherwiſe. Ruth was not a *ſtrolling girl*, but a woman who had been married near ten years, and had been long approved as a virtuous widow. It is very unfair to judge the conduct of perſons, who lived ſo long ago, by modern uſages; yet groſs miſrepreſentation is connected with this practice, in order to countenance abuſe of the Bible! But in fact Ruth's conduct was approved by all concerned in the tranſaction, and her character was declared to be unexceptionable. The unaffected ſimplicity and piety of Boaz and his reapers are worthy of admiration and imitation. The book is replete with important inſtruction, and it contains the genealogy of David, and of Chriſt, which is referred to in the New Teſtament.

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

Mr. P's argument, by which he proves that the whole of theſe books was not written by Samuel, is abſolutely concluſive; for the greateſt part of

* P. ii. p. 12.

the events recorded in them happened after his death. But before it be allowed, that they are deſtitute of authority, he muſt bring proof of this aſſertion, ſufficient to preponderate againſt the teſtimony of the Jewiſh nation for above two thouſand years at leaſt; together with that of Chriſt and his apoſtles in the New Teſtament, with the internal evidence of their authenticity and divine inſpiration.

When Samuel was raiſed up to be Judge of Iſrael, a new epoch commenced; and the hiſtory of the two kings, whom he anointed, forms a criſis, as it were between the government by judges and the full eſtabliſhment of hereditary monarchy. For this reaſon perhaps theſe books, as containing an account of this revolution, in which Samuel had ſo great a ſhare, were called by his name. I know not, that the titles given to the books of ſcripture, are ſuppoſed to be of divine authority: if therefore it ſhould be thought that theſe were improperly called the books of Samuel, and that the name given them in the ſeptuagint, of the firſt and ſecond books of Kings, is more ſuitable, I ſhould not diſpute the point. Probably Nathan and Gad, or other prophets in the days of David and Solomon, compiled them from the original records. The hiſtory contained in them has every mark of authenticity; they coincide with many of the Pſalms, and with other parts of Scripture, which refer to them; and they are replete with moſt important inſtruction.

Saul and his ſervant indeed cannot be juſtified, as to the manner in which they purpoſed to conſult

Samuel;

Samuel; but ſurely the Bible is not chargeable with the faults, which it records without approbation.* The verſe relative to the word *ſeen*, was doubtleſs added afterwards as an explanatory note.† Mr. P. ſays, "many ſenſeleſs and broken paſſages are found in the Bible;"‡ for inſtance, "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years, he choſe him three thouſand men."§ This may fairly mean, that Saul reigned one year before any thing remarkable happened; but after he had reigned two years, or in the ſecond year of his reign, according to the Hebrew idiom, the ſubſequent events took place. Surely then ſuch remarks can only be made, in order to prejudice ſuperficial readers againſt the Scriptures.

In another place, he endeavours to prove a contradiction on the writer of theſe books; becauſe Saul did not recollect David, when he returned from ſlaying Goliath.‖ David was very young when he ſtood as a muſician before Saul; he became Saul's armour-bearer, but does not appear to have entered on actual ſervice; and it is not ſaid that Abner had any acquaintance with him. Saul's mind was diſordered, and his affairs in much confuſion. Kings, eſpecially ſuch kings as Saul, are approached and ſerved by ſo many freſh faces; that they are apt *literally* to forget their old acquaintance. Some years ſeem to have elapſed, from the time, when David left court, to his appearance

* P. ii. 23, 24. † 1 Sam. ix. 9. ‡ Note, P. ii. p. 34.
§ 1 Sam. xiii. 1. ‖ Note, P. ii. p. 55. 1 Sam. xvi. 17.

appearance in a ſhepherd's dreſs before Saul in the army. Young perſons alter greatly in a little time: yet Saul ſpake as if he had ſome confuſed knowledge of him.—What ground then had Mr. P. to ſay, 'the Bible is too ridiculous even for criticiſm?' Verily I muſt think it ridiculous for men to ſet up for critics, who write with ſo little candour and conſideration.

It is proper to obſerve, that Mr. P's eloquent harangue againſt the 'callous indifference and ſtubbornneſs of prieſts,' contains no *argument* againſt the divine authority of the ſcriptures.* No true miniſter of Chriſt will wiſh to eſcape reviling from the man, who calls the Bible a *blaſphemous fraud*. Doubtleſs numbers will find their minds *tranquilized* by Mr. P's labours; for they will help ſinners to ſhake off all fear of wrath, to indulge a haughty ſelf-important ſpirit, and to vindicate their impiety and rebellion againſt God. They will in all reſpects operate, as the inſinuations of the ſerpent, "ye ſhall not ſurely die," did on the mind of Eve: but ſhould ſuch perſons at laſt find themſelves fatally deceived, they will not very agreeably own their obligations to this *humane deiſt*, at the day of judgment, and in the eternal world.

KINGS AND CHRONICLES.

Mr. P. ſays, 'the Jewiſh kings were in general a *parcel of raſcals*.' I ſuppoſe he meant to include the kings of Iſrael: but they were not Jewiſh kings. If ſuch *elegant* language pleaſe him and his

* P. ii. p. 25, 26.

his admirers, I ſhall leave him in the undiſturbed uſe of it, when applied to the kings of Iſrael: for they were univerſally apoſtates from the law and inſtituted worſhip of God; and no one of them receives a good character from the ſacred hiſtorian; though ſome of them were commiſſioned to be the executors of divine vengeance on more atrocious criminals. The tyranny and perſecution of the houſe of Ahab had been ſo deſtable, that if a Brutus had ſtabbed any of them, or a modern convention had doomed them to the ſcaffold, their patriotiſm would have been applauded; but when God employed Jehu to execute vengeance on them, it becomes murder and aſſaſſination!*

Mr. P. ſeems diſpoſed to conſider the ſeventy deſcendants of Ahab as *ſmiling infants;* but they were in general grown men; and they were ſlain by the elders of Jezreel, who had been the inſtruments of Jezebel's tyranny in the murder of Naboth and his ſons. We have, however, no more occaſion to vindicate Jehu's character, in juſtifying the conduct of the Lord, who employed him to puniſh the family of Ahab, and give him a temporal recompence; than we have to inſiſt on the virtue of the executioner in juſtifying the puniſhment of a murderer.

No part of theſe books have any appearance of being fabulous, except as Mr. P. conſiders *miracles* and *fables* to be ſynonymous terms. But if the chief uſe a man profeſſes to make of them, be

* P. ii. 25—27.

be to 'ſhew the confuſion, contradiction, and cruelty contained in ſcripture:' no wonder if he overlooks every thing that does not ſuit his purpoſe. Yet ſurely the Bible is no more anſwerable for the cruelties recorded in it with marked diſapprobation, than Mr. P. is for the cruelty of that party in the French convention, whoſe conduct he juſtly execrates. It is not enough to aſſert without proof, that the ſeverities inflicted by the Iſraelites on the inhabitants of Canaan, many centuries before, were the ſource of thoſe wars, which were carried on between the kingdoms of Iſrael and Judah; for the relative ſituation of theſe kingdoms might account for them; and ſuch bloody conteſts have taken place in other countries, in ſimilar circumſtances, though they never read or heard of the Bible.

Mr. P. finds but ſeventeen kings and one queen in Judah, from the death of Soloman to the captivity: I ſuppoſe he omits Jehoahaz and Jaconiah. Of the remaining ſeventeen, eleven died natural deaths; three were ſlain in battle, and three were ſlain by their own ſervants, who did not ſucceed to the throne. Athaliah, one of the moſt deteſtable of uſurpers and murderers, was put to death by Jehoiada. From the acceſſion of David to the captivity, the kingdom was continued in one family, by lineal deſcent from father to ſon, except as the ſons of Joſiah reigned in ſucceſſion. This was a ſpace of above five hundred years, in which there was not a ſingle revolution or civil war, and only one ſhort interruption. Perhaps it would be difficult to find any thing, in uni-

verſal

verſal hiſtory, equal to this permanent order and regularity. How many revolutions, uſurpations, murders of reigning kings by rivals and ſubjects, changes in the ſucceſſion, and civil wars carried on with ſavage cruelty, are found in the hiſtory of England, within the laſt five hundred years? Yet who thinks this a ſufficient reaſon for reviling the Engliſh nation, as Mr. P. hath done the Jews?

The reigns of David, Solomon, Aſa, Jehoſhaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Joſiah, amount together to three hundred and thirteen years; to which we may add the former part of Jehoaſh's reign, during the life of Jehoiada:* and the greateſt part of this time was evidently paſſed, either in profound peace, or in remarkable proſperity. Let then any impartial man compare the ſtate of Judah, from the acceſſion of David to the death of Joſiah, with the ſame term of years in the hiſtory of Greece, or Rome, and he will be conſtrained to admit, that the condition of Judah was unſpeakably moſt deſirable.

The nation of Iſrael did not act conſiſtently with their peculiar advantages, as the choſen people of God; and their crimes are aſſigned in Scripture, as the reaſon of their numerous calamities, and final rejection: but they were neither choſen for their *merit*, or on their *own account* excluſively; but from the wiſe and holy love and mercy of God, and for the purpoſes of his own glory, in the benefit of other ages and nations, eſpecially

* 2 Kings xiii.

pecially in introducing the goſpel and kingdom of his beloved Son. The wickedneſs of this favored people, in direct oppoſition to the requirements of their law, deciſively proves the depravity of human nature : and he, who *impartially* compares the hiſtory of Iſrael with that of other nations, will not find they were more wicked than others ; or indeed ſo wicked by far, as many have been and are at this day. But the crimes of idolaters are concealed or excuſed : while thoſe of God's worſhippers are painted in the moſt horrid colours, that ingenuity and eloquence can furniſh ; and aggravated by many palpable miſrepreſentations ! It will be known in due time, from what motive ſuch a conduct ſprings ; and ſerious enquiries will not at preſent be at any loſs upon the ſubject : nor will all Mr. P's exclamations influence any, but ſuperficial thinkers, to apply the abuſive language he employs, to Moſes, Aaron, Joſhua, Samuel and David.

The attention he has paid to his ſubject appears, from his aſſerting, that 'the genealogy from *Adam to Saul* takes up the firſt nine chapters of Chronicles :' when in fact the deſcendants of David to four generations after Zerubbabel are found in the third chapter ; and the ſucceſſion of the high prieſts till the captivity in the ſixth chapter, beſides other matters of the ſame kind ! This would be unworthy of notice, did it not ſhew that the author is not ſo competent to his undertaking, as many of his readers, who have not ſtudied the ſubject, may ſuppoſe him. He conſiders the books of Chronicles as a repeti-

tion

tion of the books of Kings; and others I find ſpeak of them in the ſame manner. But an attentive examination of them will convince any man, that this is erroneous: for the ſecond book of Chronicles contains the hiſtory of Judah only, and of the kings that ſucceeded David till the captivity; and it gives a more copious and methodical account of them, than is found in the books of Kings. Theſe latter, from the diviſion of the nation into two kingdoms, reſemble an hiſtory of France and England carried on together, with continual tranſitions from one to the other. The former is like the hiſtory of England apart, in which the affairs of France are only mentioned, when they are connected with thoſe of England.

What then ſhall we think of a man, who charges two hiſtorians with being impoſtors and liars, becauſe they do not exactly relate the ſame events? Had they written the hiſtory of the ſame kingdom, they might ſurely have had the liberty to ſelect, according to their different views, the peculiar facts which they would record: for no hiſtorian can record every thing that happens. But their hiſtories relate to diſtinct ſubjects, and the writer of Chronicles had nothing immediately to do with the affairs of Iſrael. He, who undertakes to write the annals of England, is not bound to relate the extraordinary meaſures and edicts of the French convention: and ſhould ſome author in future times on this ground aſſert, that 'the hiſtorians of England and France did not believe one another, they knew each other too well:' the

obſervation would not, I ſuppoſe, greatly recommend his candour and penetration.

The hiſtory of Jeroboam and his altar belonged to the affairs of Iſrael; but had the hiſtorian of Judah deemed it falſe, he would probably have contradicted it. The extraordinary prophecy, however connected with it, which Joſiah above three hundred years after ſo exactly accompliſhed in the view of the whole nation, ſufficiently authenticates the narrative, in the judgment of all ſober men. The actions of Elijah and Eliſha alſo belonged to the hiſtory of Iſrael; for neither of them reſided or propheſyed in Judah: and Mr. P's contemptuous aſtoniſhment, and ſarcaſtical remarks on Elijah's tranſlation, and the miracles of Eliſha* require no anſwer. The writer of Chronicles, however, would not have declined recording them, had they fallen within his plan, leſt he ſhould be accuſed of lying and romancing: for he relates facts equally marvellous; ſuch as the ſlaughter of Sennacherib's army by an angel, and the retrogade motion of the ſhadow on the dial of Ahaz by Hezekiah's deſire.

Some difficulty occurs in reconciling the dates given in different places, of the time when Jehoram, ſon of Jehoſhaphat, began to reign: but ſimilar difficulties occur in other ancient hiſtories —yet we do not generally accuſe the hiſtorians, on ſuch ſlender grounds, of contradicting themſelves. Perhaps Jehoram was admitted to a ſhare in the regal authority, before he ſucceeded to the kingdom at his father's death; as Solomon had been

* P. ii. p. 30, 83.

been before him: or perhaps ſome trivial error in a numeral letter hath taken place, by the inadvertency of tranſcribers.

It would not have been proper for the hiſtorians to go out of their way, to ſpeak of the ſeveral prophets who lived in the times of which they wrote, further than they had ſome concern in the public affairs recorded by them. But in general they mention the prophets with peculiar reſpect; and uniformly aſcribe the calamities of Judah and Iſrael to the conduct of the rulers and people, in deſpiſing and perſecuting them, and in hearkening to the falſe prophets who contradicted them: and this does not appear 'a degrading ſilence,' except to a jaundiced eye. Mr. P. ſays, 'the name of Jonah is mentioned, on account of the reſtoration of a tract of land by Jeroboam.'* The paſſage referred to this. "Jeroboam, the ſon of Joaſh, reſtored the coaſt of Iſrael, according to the word of the Lord God of Iſrael, which he ſpake by the hand of his ſervant Jonah, the ſon of Ammittai, the prophet of Gath-hepher.'† This is ſurely a very honorable mention of Jonah, as a ſervant of the Lord, and a prophet, whoſe predictions had been ſignally accompliſhed: whereas an inattentive reader would have ſuppoſed from Mr. P's account, that Jonah had only been named, as concurring in ſome civil tranſaction.

Upon the whole, as far as the hiſtorians and prophets are capable of honoring each other, they certainly do it.—This may therefore ſuffice, in anſwer

* Note P. ii. p. 31. † 2 Kings, xiv. 25.

anſwer to the objections made to theſe books; but did not brevity forbid, it would be eaſy to prove, from the prophecies contained in them, and evidently accompliſhed, and from the New Teſtament, that they not only contain authentic hiſtory, taken from the records of Judah and Iſrael, but were penned under the ſuperintending inſpiration of the Holy Spirit; for they certainly were contained in thoſe ſcriptures, which our Lord declared "muſt be fulfilled," and could not be broken." and all of which St. Paul declares, "were given by inſpiration of God."*

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

This author, who calls the writers of Kings and Chronicles, *impoſtors* and *lyars:* becauſe they do not record the ſame events, attempts to ſhew the diſordered ſtate of the Bible; becauſe the ſecond of Chronicles and the book of Ezra, do record the ſame event; ſo impoſſible is it for inſpired writers to pleaſe determined infidels! Probably Ezra himſelf compiled the books of Chronicles, or the greateſt part of them, from the public records of the nation, and other books to which he appeals as his authority: and if he choſe to begin the hiſtory of the Jews ſubſequent to the captivity, with the ſame words that cloſed his preceding narrative, it might have as obviouſly been aſcribed to a ſcrupulous regard to accuracy, as called *cutting* and *ſkuffling*. But even if it ſhould be allowed, that the concluding

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

concluding verſes of Chronicles were added afterwards from Ezra by miſtake, what has that to do with the authenticity of the books themſelves?

Mr. P. ſays that the laſt verſe in Chronicles 'ends abruptly, with the word *up*, without ſaying to what place.'* But Jeruſalem had juſt been mentioned, and I ſuppoſe no man before ever doubted what place was intended: had the word *aſcend* been uſed by our tranſlators, inſtead of *go up*, his wit and argument would have been loſt; for they wholly conſiſt in an inſulated monoſyllable! Such cavils are not worth anſwering; except as they illuſtrate the ſuperior diſcernment of thoſe, who in an age of reaſon, are too wiſe to believe the Scriptures.

We are alſo informed that the Jews did 'not always believe their leaders, as appears from the cavalier manner in which they ſpake of Moſes.'† This, I ſuppoſe is inſerted to ſhow, that there have always been infidels, that they are perſons of diſtinguiſhed penetration, and that they take pleaſure in diſcovering and commending each other.

Mr. P. ſpeaks of Ezra and Nehemiah, as if they returned together with the firſt Jews from Babylon; and he ſays, that 'the book of Ezra was written immediately after, or about five hundred and thirty-ſix before Chriſt, and Nehemiah was another of the returned perſons, who wrote an account of the *ſame affair*.' But indeed Ezra did not return till near eighty years after the decree of Cyrus, according to the ableſt chronologers;

* P. ii. p. 34. † Note, P. ii. p. 35. Exod. xxxii. 1.

gers; and it is evident by *his own account*, that the temple, after many delays, was completed ſome time before he arrived at Jeruſalem——Nehemiah returned thirteen years afterwards; he continues his narrative from the concluſion of Ezra's hiſtory, and relates none *of the ſame events*. So ill informed is this writer, as to the contents of that volume he undertakes to invalidate! Ezra could not *by miſtake* admit the difference between the amount of thoſe enrolled in families, and the number of the whole company: nor would any impoſtor have left ſo bare-faced an error, if it was one. For the ſurplus might be Jews or Iſraelites, who were not able to prove their genealogies; and probably Ezra inſerted the regiſter, which was made at their firſt return from captivity, out of the public records without any alteration.

But the regiſter in Nehemiah has greater difficulties. One would have expected from the narrative, that a new enrollment would have been made of the Jews reſiding at that time in Judea: but inſtead of this, the old regiſter of thoſe who returned with Zerubbabel is inſerted, with ſome variations; and the ſame ſum total is mentioned, though the ſeveral ſums amount to thirty-one thouſand and eighty-nine.* I firmly believe Nehemiah's hiſtory to be authentic and divine; but we are not authoriſed to expect miracles to prevent the uneſſential miſtakes of tranſcribers. I therefore ſuſpect, that, by ſome means or other, an incorrect copy of the firſt regiſter was here ſubſtituted

* Ezra. ii. Neh. vii.

tel, inſtead of the new regiſter made by Nehemiah. A very ſlight acquaintance with critical learning will convince any candid man, that ſuch variations in ancient authors may generally be diſcovered; and that they produce no uncertainty in the great outlines of the events recorded by them. But I think it better fairly to own the difficulty, than to paſs it over in ſilence, or to give an anſwer which does not ſatisfy my own mind. It is, however a ſingular inſtance, and in my judgment, does not weigh a grain, in counterpoiſe againſt the weight of evidence in the oppoſite ſcale.

Mr. P. ſeems willing to allow that Ezra and Nehemiah wrote the books aſcribed to them; but he ſays they are nothing to us.* He ſeems here to forget, that the prophecy of Jeremiah was extant when the book of Ezra was written, and that the events recorded by Ezra were a declared accompliſhment of his predictions.† This is ſurely of ſome conſequence in the argument. But we may alſo add, that theſe two books ſo conſtantly refer to all the parts of ſcripture, which we have been conſidering, that they concluſively prove the whole to have been then extant, and received by the Jews as authentic records of divine authority. If then Ezra and Nehemiah wrote theſe books ſoon after the captivity, we may confidently infer, that the writings of Moſes, and all the hiſtorical part of the Old Teſtament (except Eſther) were received by the whole Jewiſh nation as a divine revelation near five hundred years before the birth of Chriſt.

ESTHER.

* P. ii. p. 35. † Ezra i. 2.

ESTHER.

Mr. P. ſays, 'if madam Eſther thought it any honor to offer herſelf as a kept miſtreſs to Ahaſuerus, &c.* Now where did he learn, that ſhe thus offered herſelf to be a kept miſtreſs to the king? I apprehend ſhe had no more choice whether ſhe would enter Ahaſuerus's ſeraglio, than Mr. P. had whether he would lodge in the Luxembourg. Such inſinuations therefore too much reſemble the conduct of *hypocritical prieſts*, who ſay, 'if the people choſe to be deceived, let them be deceived.' The book itſelf has this proof of authenticity, that the Jews to this day obſerve the feaſt of *Purim*, in remembrance of their wonderful deliverance, which God vouchſafed them by means of Eſther and Mordecai.

CHAPTER III.

FROM JOB TO SOLOMON'S SONG.

JOB.

Mr. P. ſpeaks reſpectfully of this book,† but tries to prove it to be of gentile extraction. It coincides, however, ſo entirely with the other ſcriptures, in the doctrine of human depravity, the impoſſibility of any man juſtifying himſelf before God,

* P. ii. p. 37. † P. i. p. 28. P. ii. 37. 38.

God, the Redeemer that would ſtand at the latter day upon the earth a future reſurrection, and the preſumption of our reaſonings concerning the works and ways of God; that it accords with no other gentile book: and either it muſt be explained away as a fabulous drama, or Mr. P. and his friends will not long retain their reſpect for it.

The word *Satan*, he ſays, is not mentioned in the Bible, except in Job. The reader may ſee the *accuracy* of this author's obſervations, by turning to the paſſages referred to!* But *this* appears ſtill more fully in his argument, grounded on the words *Pleiades*, *Orion*, and *Arcturus*, which are found in our tranſlation of Job. He obſerves that theſe are Greek names; the Jews were ſo ignorant of aſtronomy, that they had no words anſwerable to them, and thus it is proved that Job is a gentile book! The learned reader will know, that no ſuch words occur in the Hebrew Bible; and the unlearned may be aſſured that the original word for *Arcturus* is *Hus*, that for *Orion* is *Cheſil*, and that for *Pleiades*, *Kima*.† If Mr. P's two authorities, Aben-ezra and Spinoſa (the former a whimſical deiſtical Jew, and the other, after many changes, an atheiſt) could not give him more correct information; it is a pity he did not deſire ſome learned friend to conſult the Hebrew Bible; for ſo egregious a blunder, in ſuch a celebrated writer, is a moſt unfortunate circumſtance.

In order to calumniate the Jews, the 'heathens are ſaid to be a juſt and moral people, not addicted

* Chron. xxi. 1. Pſ. cix. 6. Zech. iii. 1. † Job ix. 9. xxxviii. 31, 32.

dicted to cruelty and revenge.' What heathens are meant I know not: but the writers of the Greeks and Romans, and of every other nation, whoſe hiſtories are extant, repreſent mankind in a very different light. Romances about juſt and moral nations, not addicted to cruelty and revenge, may be found; but where ſhall we meet with an authentic hiſtory of ſuch a people by an impartial well informed writer? In ſaying that the heathens did not worſhip images, Mr. P. contradicts univerſal hiſtory, as well as the Bible.*

PSALMS.

If the Spirit of God ſpake by the pſalmiſt, and his words were upon his tongue,† and if Chriſt and his apoſtles may be credited, the Pſams, which are called *revengeful*, were prophecies, and denunciations of vengeance on the enemies of the Meſſiah and his cauſe. That ſome of them are predictions, which have been moſt wonderfully accompliſhed, no ſober man can deny.‡ The word, *ſong-books*, which is generally uſed for collections of frivolous or paltry traſh, ſeems purpoſely choſen to degrade, in the reader's opinion, the moſt beautiful odes, and the moſt exalted ſtrains of heavenly piety, that ever were publiſhed to mankind. The Pſalms aſcribed to David bear internal evidence of being genuine: but I do not ſuppoſe it neceſſary to vindicate the divine authority of all the titles contained in the whole book. Any expoſi-

tor

* P. ii. p. 39. † 1 Sam. xxiii. 2. ‡ Pſ. xxii. lxix. cx.

tor almoſt would have informed Mr. P. that the Pſalms are by no means conſidered as written by David alone: but the abſurdity of ſuppoſing him the author of the one hundred and thirty-ſeventh Pſalm, gives Mr. P. an opportunity of declaiming againſt the impoſition of the Bible, and of diverting his readers with the fancy of 'a man's walking in proceſſion at his own funeral.' But is this the frame of mind, which becomes an enquirer after important truth?

PROVERBS.

Our author allows there to be ſome wiſdom in the Proverbs aſcribed to Solomon, though he decided (at a time *when he had no Bible*) that they were inferior to the proverbs of the Spaniards, or the maxims of Dr. Franklin!* and he ſeems diſpoſed to give the credit of them to his favorites the Gentiles.† As ſome of the proverbs of Solomon were occupied out by the men of Hezekiah, he concludes that they were falſely aſcribed to him: and he ſuppoſes it to have been the faſhion of that day to make proverbs, as it is now to make *jeſt books*. If this were indeed the caſe, *that* ſhould have been called the *age of reaſon*, and *this* the *age of levity and folly*: for ſurely wiſe proverbs are more reaſonable, than profane, filthy, and ſcurrillous jeſts, according to the cuſtom of modern times!

Mr. P. expreſſes great approbation of Agur's prayer, 'as the only ſenſible, well-convinced, and well-

* P. i. p. 16. † P. ii. p, 40.

well-expreſſed prayer in the Bible!'* As he ſeems to have changed his ſentiments concerning prayer, ſince he wrote the firſt part of the Age of Reaſon,† I would heartily recommend that of Agur to his conſtant and fervent uſe; with an eſpecial attention to the clauſe, "remove from me vanity and lies."‡ If Agur were a Gentile, according to Mr. P's ſuppoſition, the Jews were not ſo bigotted, as to reject what they found good, even among the heathen: but I imagine he knows no more than the reſt of us, who Agur and Lemuel were.

He adds, however, that 'the Jews never prayed but when they were in trouble; and never for any thing but victory, vengeance, and riches!' All, who deem prayer their duty and privilege, will be more earneſt in it during ſpecial trials, than at other times; though they never wholly neglect it: and nations engaged in war, if they truſt in God and appeal to him, muſt pray for victory.—Moſt of the prayers of this kind, recorded in ſcripture, were preſented by the rulers of Iſrael, when aſſaulted by injurious and blaſphemous invaders: few prayers for vengeance can be found, which are not evident predictions, or warnings to the enemies of God: and ſcarcely any for riches, unleſs exemption from famine and the bleſſings of plentiful harveſts be ſo called. Solomon's prayer, for wiſdom, and not for riches, long life, or the life of his enemies, was not offered in trouble. Mr. P. commends the nineteenth Pſalm, § yet the latter part of it is

* P. ii. p. 39. † P. i. 25, 26. ‡ Prov. xxx. 7—9.
§ P. i. p. 28, 29.

is a prayer, neither for victory, vengeance, nor riches. But it would be loſs of time, to enter into further particulars: I cannot, however, cloſe the ſubject, without obſerving, that the man, who thus wantonly ſlanders a whole nation, is not the moſt proper perſon to declaim againſt the wickedneſs of prieſts and prophets!

ECCLESIASTES.*

Mr. P. treats Eccleſiaſtes, as the reflections of a worn out debauchee, and ſuppoſes the exclamation, "all is vanity," to relate entirely to Solomon's thouſand wives and concubines. He repreſents him, not as a *penitent*, but as *melancholy*: and he adds, 'ſeven hundred wives and three hundred concubines would have ſtood in the place of the whole book!' and then he deſcants on the folly of licentiouſneſs. But in fact theſe wives and concubines are but once hinted at, while the preacher ſhews, from experience and the nature of things, the vanity and vexation of riches, magnificence, authority, and ſenſual indulgence; and even of ſcience and wiſdom, unleſs connected with true religion: and he cloſes with exhorting the reader to "fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole man."

Far be it from me to vindicate Solomon, or to palliate that conduct, of which he ſeems to have deeply repented: yet he is repreſented in Scripture, as drawn aſide in his old age, and not as licentious

* P. ii. p. 41, 42.

centious in his youth. His immenſe ſeraglio ſeems to have been principally a fooliſh affection of ſuperior magnificence, and a conformity to the eaſtern cuſtoms; while ſome of his women gained the aſcendancy over him, and induced him in the decline of life, to commit thoſe crimes, from which he had before been exempt.

As Mr. P. ſays that Solomon was *witty*, while the Bible every where ſpeaks of him as *wiſe*: we may the leſs wonder, that he ſhould call a book, full of declamation, invective, and profane jeſts, 'The Age of Reaſon:' for he evidently ſuppoſes *wit* and *wiſdom* to be ſynonymous terms!

SOLOMON's SONG.*

Our author is very merry upon Solomon's *ſongs*, as he calls this book; and I agree with him, that he wants the tunes and cannot ſing ſuch ſongs: that is, his heart is not in tune for them.† As this book is not quoted in the New Teſtament, and as few derive benefit from it, till they have learned divine truth from other ſcriptures, I ſhall not enter into any further argument about it; though I firmly believe it to be a very uſeful part of God's word.

The *Bible-makers* had nothing to do with the order, in which the books are placed in the Old Teſtament; nor are they arranged in the ſame manner in the Hebrew Bible, as in our tranſlation. If therefore Solomon's Song has been miſplaced, that it does not at all diſprove the divine inſpiration of the Holy Scriptures, which is the point I have undertaken to defend. CHAP.

* P. ii. p. 42, 43. † Rev. i. 5, v. 9—14, xiv. 3.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROPHETS.

ISAIAH.

IT is probable, that Mr. P. is the firſt writer, capable of attracting the public notice, who has deemed the book of Iſaiah to be 'bombaſtical rant, extravagant metaphor, ſuch ſtuff as a ſchool-boy would have been ſcarcely inexcuſable for writing!'* I ſhall, however, leave him to ſettle this point with thoſe able critics, and admired judges, of fine writing, who have decidedly preferred ſome parts of Iſaiah's poetry, for ſublimity and beauty, to all other compoſitions now extant in the world.

Occaſional poems and ſermons are not always arranged in very regular order: ſome able authors have publiſhed volumes of miſcellanies, and we ought not to judge of an eaſtern writer by *our* rules of method. A curſory peruſal will not always enable a man to diſcern the drift and plan of an author, when they may be clearly aſcertained upon a more accurate inveſtigation; and ſometimes the concluſion of one poem or meſſage, and the beginning of another may eſcape the notice of a haſty reader: ſo that there is probably much more order and connection in this book, than Mr. P. ſuppoſes. The hiſtorical part was evidently added,

to

* P. ii. p. 43.

to illuſtrate the prophecies, and to *prevent*, not *make* confuſion.*

The burden of Damaſcus, the burden of Moab, or the burden of Babylon, may be ridiculed, and ranked with childiſh ſtories, and abſurd romances; but it would not be ſo eaſy to ſhew, by what means the writer could foreſee, that Babylon, then growing in greatneſs, and ſhortly to be the metropolis of the world, would at length be 'ſwept with the beſom of deſtruction:' as it actually hath been; ſo that it is not at preſent certainly known where that vaſt and magnificent city once ſtood. This ſingle prophecy amounts to a demonſtration, that God ſpake by the prophet Iſaiah.†

The prediction of Cyrus by name, above one hundred years before his birth, if allowed to have been written by Iſaiah, would have ſubverted our author's whole ſyſtem. Like an able general, therefore, he forms a ſtratagem of ſeizing our artillery, and employing it againſt us! He confidently aſſerts (and that paſſes for proof with many readers) that the whole paſſage was written one hundred and fifty years after Iſaiah's death, in compliment to Cyrus: and on this ground he declaims as uſual againſt the audacity of the church, prieſtly ignorance, and the confuſion of the Bible!‡

But ought he not firſt to prove his aſſertion, or ſhew that God cannot reveal future events, before he indulges his propenſity to revile? The connection of theſe predictions,§ with the whole ſcope

* P. ii. p. 43. † P. ii. 43, 44. ‡ P. ii. p. 44, 45.
§ If. xliv. 28. xlv. 1—4.

ſcope of the prophet's addreſs to the people in the name of Jehovah, is very evident. The God of Iſrael repeatedly appeals to prophecies already accompliſhed, as proofs of his deity, in oppoſition to the claims of idols: he adds "new things do I declare, before they come to paſs I tell you of them;" and he challenges his rivals, the idols of the nations in this manner, "ſhew the things, that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods."* And after various other predictions, he delivers that in queſtion, with the greateſt ſolemnity, as a proof of his eternal power and Godhead.

Had this prophecy ſtood *ſingle*, in the writings of Iſaiah, the aſſertion, that it was 'added one hundred and fifty years afterwards by ſome audacious ignorant compiler, from ſome looſe anonymous eſſays,' might have been more tolerable; but the whole book is replete with predictions at leaſt equally plain, and verified by the events in the moſt aſtoniſhing manner! So that it might as reaſonably be aſſerted, that the fifty-third chapter was written after the crucifixion of Chriſt, and the eſtabliſhment of his religion; or the fourteenth after the entire deſolation of Babylon; as that the prediction concerning Cyrus was added after he had conquered the Chaldean monarchy.

The teſtimony of the Jews, through every age, to this book as genuine, though it contains ſuch numerous prophecies, which were fulfilled in Jeſus of Nazareth, ſufficiently determines that point

* Iſ. xli. 23. xliii. 9.

with all ſober and competent judges. It would likewiſe prove no eaſy taſk, to ſhew, how it could be poſſible to obtain credit to ſuch a prophecy, if invented after its pretended accompliſhment: for would a whole nation be perſuaded, that they had always been acquainted with the prediction, during the courſe of one hundred and fifty years, if they had never before heard any thing of it? But Mr. P. takes it for granted, that if prieſts be allowed *ſufficiently knaviſh* to attempt impoſition, the people will always be found *ſufficiently fooliſh* to ſwallow their impoſtures without examination: whereas much art has ever been found neceſſary for ſuch attempts; the prophecies of impoſtors have always been ambiguous; and the miracles to which they pretended either doubtful in their nature, or wrought only before a few individuals that were friendly to the cauſe.

It may alſo be added, that a man muſt have taken a ſingular method of complimenting a great prince; who ſhould forge predictions, tending to pour contempt on his religion, and to degrade the gods to which he was continually ſacrificing.

Mr. P. confounds the *ſcripture makers*, with the perſons who added the contents of the chapters, and the running titles at the top of the page, in many of our Bibles. Theſe ſeem generally made with propriety; but it is ſelf-evident, that they are not the *ſtudied craft of the ſcripture makers*: nor can it be conceived that he is ſo ignorant, as not to know they were added many centuries after their death.*

His

* P. ii. p. 45.

His language concerning the miraculous conception of Chriſt will be cautiouſly noticed in another place: and the *grounds* on which the words of Iſaiah, "a virgin ſhall conceive and bear a ſon, and they ſhall call his name Emmanuel," have been interpreted of that event, muſt be looked for in the works of expoſitors—But the aſſertion, that 'this doctrine has ſtained every ſpot in Chriſtendom, with blood, and marked it with deſolation,' muſt not paſs unnoticed. Blood enough has, alas, been ſhed by men called Chriſtians; but this doctrine has ſeldom been ſo much as the pretence of it. The Athanaſians and Arians had too acrimonious conteſts: but both parties agreed in the miraculous conception, and the application of Iſaiah's prophecy. The papal antichriſt has been drunk with the blood of martyrs: but where has the denial of the miraculous conception of Chriſt been the ground of theſe outrages? The Socinians have only of *late* denied the miraculous conception; though many of them, and others likewiſe, have underſtood Matthew, as quoting Iſaiah by way of accommodation; but they have not in many inſtances been harraſſed with bloody deſolating perſecution. Probably Mr. P. would find ſome difficulty in preciſely pointing out a dozen ſpots in Chriſtendom, ſtained with blood, and marked with deſolation *on this account*. But all weapons are fair againſt prieſts and prophets, and that *ſtructure of ſuperſtition built upon the Bible!**

Should we grant, that the prophecy had a ſubordinate reference to events, which took place ſoon

* P. ii. 45.

ſoon after it was delivered: it would ſtill be true, that the literal and exact accompliſhment can only be found in that great event, to which the evangeliſt applies it. Some meaſure of obſcurity ſeems adapted to the nature of prophecy, previous to its fulfilment: and, though the virgin's ſon was named JESUS, yet he was EMMANUEL, in his perſon and character, and has been ſo called by tens of thouſands in all ſucceeding generations.

Mr. P's ſerioufneſs and candour may be eſtimated, by comparing his account of the tranſaction recorded in the ſeventh of Iſaiah, with the words of the ſacred writer. It would be trifling with the reader, to tranſcribe his ludicrous expreſſions and malignant inſinuations againſt ancient prophets and modern prieſts; but a direct charge of impoſition and falſhood, brought againſt Iſaiah, requires ſome notice.—The kings of Iſrael and Syria confederated to invade Judah, to deſtroy the family of David, and make the ſon of Tabeal king of Judah; and Iſaiah predicted, that this counſel ſhould not ſtand; that the kingdom of Iſrael ſhould come to an end in ſeventy-five years; that the confederate princes ſhould be deſtroyed; and that the family of David ſhould be preſerved till the coming of Emmanuel. At the ſame time, however, he declared to Ahaz and his princes, that "if they would not believe, they ſhould not be eſtabliſhed." But we find,* that the Lord delivered Ahaz into the hand of the king of Syria, and into the hand of the king of Iſrael;" and that they made moſt dreadful havock of the Jews, and took an

* 2 Corn. xxviii.

an immenſe number of captives :—on this ground, Mr. P. ſays, 'the two kings *did ſucceed;* Ahaz was defeated and *deſtroyed.* Thus much for this lying prophet, and his book of falſhoods.'* But will he ſtand to it, that the two kings ſucceeded in dethroning Ahaz; deſtroying the family of David, and advancing the ſon of Tabeal to the throne? It is allowed, that Ahaz was not eſtabliſhed, becauſe he did not believe: he was defeated, but he was not *deſtroyed;* for he ſurvived both the confederate princes many years, and died a natural death. Pekah, king of Iſrael, *induced by the humane remonſtrances of a prophet,* ſent back the priſoners, refreſhed and clothed from the ſpoil; and he was ſlain by Hoſea in the fourth year of Ahaz; as Rezin, king of Syria, was by Tiglath-Pilezer about the ſame time. Within the preſcribed years, the Aſſyrians finally deſtroyed the kingdom of Iſrael, and the family of David was preſerved till the birth of Emmanuel. Thus Iſaiah's predictions were moſt circumſtantially fulfilled; and if Mr. P. by *miſtake,* ſuppoſes the project of the two kings to have actually *ſucceeded,* and that Ahaz was *deſtroyed* by Pekah, he muſt have very ſuperficially conſidered his ſubject, and very raſhly begun to revile the prophet: but if he knew better, yet was willing to miſlead his readers, he is not a proper perſon to call prophets lyars and impoſtors. One of theſe muſt be the caſe: and I leave him and his admirers, to chooſe either part of the dilemma, according to their diſcretion. Thus much for Mr.

P's

* P. ii. p. 47.

P's invectives againſt Iſaiah, in which there is nothing but unfounded confident aſſerſion, and vehement declamation ; yet I fear many will miſtake theſe for arguments.

JEREMIAH.*

This prophet is repreſented as a traitor to Zedekiah, and in the intereſt of Nebuchadnezzar. But it ſhould be noted, that he had propheſied about forty years at the time when Jeruſalem was taken ; and, as he had been the faithful friend of his country, and of ſucceeding princes, for ſo long a time ; it requires ſomething more than aſſertion to convince an impartial perſon, that he became a traitor at laſt ; eſpecially as he refuſed the favors offered him by Nebuchadnezzar, after the city was deſolated according to his predictions.

The Lord declares by the prophet, that his promiſes and threatenings *to nations* contain an implied condition ; ſo that national repentance would avert threatened judgments, and national wickedneſs forfeit promiſed mercies.† This Mr. P. calls 'an abſurd ſubterfuge of the prophet, conſiſtent with nothing but the ſtupidity of the Bible :' but ſurely it was a ſalutary warning and an encouraging inſtruction, both to Iſrael and other nations. Had the people repented, and yet judgments had come on them, or had they eſcaped judgments without repentance, the prophet would have had no ſubterfuge ; and if he had denounced vengeance without

* P. ii p. 47—54. † Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

without any intimation of mercy, the unrelenting ſpirit of prophets would have furniſhed a ſubject for declamation.

The diſorder charged on this book, as if it proved it ſpurious, might ariſe from the conduct of thoſe, who after Jeremiah's death, put his detached prophecies together; as *it is not impoſſible* that Mr. P's pamphlets may hereafter be publiſhed in volumes. Jeremiah's *predictions* are generally *dated*, though his *ſermons* are not; ſo that Mr. P. exceeds truth, when he compares the book to a bundle of newſpapers *without date*.

He next charges contradiction on the prophet becauſe two different accounts are given of his impriſonment by Zedekiah: but nothing can be more obvious, than that he was twice impriſoned; once in the houſe of Jonathan the ſcribe, from which he was liberated to the court of the priſon by Zedekiah; the ſecond time in the dungeon of Malchijah, the ſon of Hammeleck, whence he was freed by Ebed-meleck.*

The different names, in the twenty-firſt and the thirty-eighth chapters, ſhew that diſtinct events are recorded; and ſo far from the conference in the twenty-firſt, breaking off abruptly at the tenth verſe; the ſubject ſeems to be continued to the end of the next chapter. No contradiction has therefore been proved againſt the prophet.

Had Mr. P. ſucceeded in ſhewing that 'a man of God could tell a lie,' it would not much have ſerved his cauſe; unleſs he could alſo have proved that

* Jer. xxxvii. xxxviii.

that he vindicated it: for believers do not conſider the ſacred writers as *impeccable*, though they wrote under an infallible guidance. His attempt, however, is as unſucceſsful in this, as in the former inſtance. Zedekiah directed the prophet to ſay to the princes, "I preſented my ſupplication before the king, that he would not cauſe me to return to Jonathan's houſe to die there;" and "he told them according to all the words the king commanded." Now Mr. P. ſays, 'Jeremiah did not *go* to Zedekiah to make his ſupplication:' true; neither did he ſay that he *went* for that purpoſe: but he adds, 'neither did he make it.' In reſpect of this laſt aſſertion, ſome will believe Jeremiah, who ſaid "he did make his ſupplication to the king:" and ſome will credit Mr. P. when he ſays, 'he did not make it.' For my part I believe the prophet, ſuppoſing him to be the beſt informed of the two; and looking on him as an approved character, eminent in piety and integrity. And even a *man of God* is not bound to tell an impertinent enquirer all he knows: though he may not ſpeak falſhood.

Mr. P's next charge is of a ſtill more ſerious nature; for he accuſes Jeremiah of delivering falſe predictions. The prophet had told Zedekiah, that "his eyes ſhould behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and that he ſhould ſpeak to him mouth to mouth; that he ſhould go to Babylon; that he ſhould not die by the ſword, but in peace, and that they ſhould burn odours for him, and lament him!"* Mr. P. contraſts this prophecy with the hiſtory

* Jer. xxxiv.

hiſtory of the event,* and adds, ‘ what can we ſay of theſe prophets, but that they are impoſtors and liars ?’† But how could the king of Babylon ſlay Zedekiah's ſons *before his eyes*, without Zedekiah's eyes ſeeing thoſe of the king of Babylon ? Certainly the prediction was fulfilled moſt exactly : for Zedekiah was carried to Babylon and died there, not by the ſword, but in peace ; and there can be no reaſonable doubt, but he received funeral honors from the captive Jews, by the permiſſion of the king of Babylon.

Ezekiel foretold, that “ Zedekiah ſhould not ſee Babylon, though he ſhould die there.”‡ Some years ago I wrote thus, ‘ perhaps Zedekiah fancied the two prophets contradicted each other, and ſo diſregarded both ; but both were exactly accompliſhed, when he was brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, had his eyes put out, and was carried to Babylon.’§ I have ſince that time entertained ſome doubts, whether I had not aſcribed to Zedekiah a degree of *inattention*, beyond all probability : Mr. P. however has far exceeded it, in this moſt puny endeavour to prove Jeremiah a falſe prophet.

He next aſſerts that ‘ Jeremiah joined himſelf to Nebuchadnezzar, and went about propheſying for him among the Egyptians. Thus much for another of theſe lying prophets.’ I leave it to Mr. P's friends to determine what name belongs to this repreſentation of Jeremiah's conduct ; but

* Jer. lii. 10, 11. † P. ii. 53. ‡ Ezek. xii. 13. § Family Bible.

it certainly contradicts the only narrative we have of thoſe events. He refuſed the friendly offers of Nebuzaraddan: and with a patriotiſm which Mr. P. would have admired in any man, except a prophet or a prieſt, choſe to caſt his lot among the remnant of his diſtreſſed countrymen. He did all in his power to prevent their migration into Egypt, and was at length carried along with them by force. There indeed he propheſied againſt the Egyptians, and other nations, and eſpecially againſt *the Babylonians*, without the leaſt advantage or attention from Nebuchadnezzar. Theſe propheſies, with their *remote* but exact accompliſhment, will ſtand as demonſtrations that Jeremiah ſpake by the inſpiration of the Holy Spirit: when Mr. P's raſh charges of lies and impoſture will turn to his confuſion; unleſs it pleaſe God, "to give him repentance for the acknowledging of the truth; that he may recover himſelf out of the ſnare of the devil, who takes ſinners captive at his will."

This author's ſingular opinion concerning prophets will be conſidered ſeparately; but his charge againſt them as party men in politics muſt here be refuted. The firſt inſtance he produces, in ſupport of it, is that of the prophet from Judah, who went to Jeroboam:* and no doubt he took part with the worſhippers of Jehovah againſt the devotees of the golden calves. There is no proof that the old prophet at Bethel ſided with Jeroboam, though he had not courage to proteſt againſt

* 1 Kings xiii.

againſt his idolatry; and his aſſertion is equally unfounded, but much more abſurd, when he ſays, that the prophet of Judah was 'found dead by the contrivance of the prophet of Iſrael!' What does Mr. P. think, that the prophets kept lions in their pay to ſlay their rivals?—The honorable interment given by the old prophet to the man of God from Judah, his deſire of being buried near him, and his confidence that his predictions would ſurely be accompliſhed, do not render it very probable that he called him 'a lying prophet, as Mr. P. ſays, 'no doubt he did!'*

He next attacks Eliſha as a *Judahmite* prophet, though he ſpent his life in Iſrael, and never prophecied in Judah! Joram the ſon of Ahab was a very wicked man and a moſt incorrigible idolater: Jehoſhaphat, though faulty in forming connections with him and his family, was a moſt pious and equitable prince. When therefore theſe two kings, with the king of Edom, applied to Eliſha, in extreme diſtreſs,† he ſhewed reſpect to Jehoſhaphat, but would ſhew none to Joram. In any other man, Mr. P. would have admired the noble ſpirit evinced by this conduct: but in this caſe he calls it 'the venom and vulgarity of a party prophet.' The reader muſt determine who ſhews venom and vulgarity.

The prophet finding himſelf diſcompoſed by recollecting the idolatries and perſecutions of Ahab's family (as may probably be ſuppoſed) called for a minſtrel, that his ſerenity might be reſtored

* P. ii. p. 55. † 2 Kings iii.

reſtored and his mind prepared for the prophetic impulſe. This Mr. P. *candidly* calls 'the farce of a conjurer;' and he ſtrangely miſtakes the *minſtrel*, or player on an inſtrument, for the inſtrument itſelf: and adds, 'Eliſha ſaid (ſinging moſt probably to the tune he was playing) Thus ſaith the Lord, make the vally full of ditches—without either *farce* or *fiddle*, the way to get water was to dig for it.'—Does this jumble of miſtake and raillery require any anſwer? Neither the kings nor their officers expected to find water by digging there, and how came Eliſha by his ſuperior diſcernment? The Moabites were deceived by the appearance of the water, and ſo ruſhed upon their deſtruction; which would not have been the caſe, had water been generally obſerved in that place. Whole armies have been known to periſh for want of water, in thoſe very deſerts; and every ſober and candid reader will allow, that this army would have periſhed, had not God wrought a miracle for their deliverance. It is, however ſelf-evident, that they were preſerved, and rendered victorious, either by the ſagacity of the prophet, or by the word which the Lord ſpake by him: yet he muſt be branded as *venomous* and *virulent*, for proteſting againſt Joram's crimes, in milder language, than Mr. P. or his friends have uſed againſt the kings of France or England!

He adds, that 'all the prophets were famous for lying:' (how wonderful then is it, that he cannot *prove* one ſingle lie to have been told by any of them!) 'and ſome of them excelled in curſing,

curſing, eſpecially Eliſha.'* The children, or young perſons, whom Eliſha curſed in the name of the Lord, immediately after Elijah's tranſlation, reproached him with his baldneſs, and bade him go up, or *aſcend*; as if they had ſaid a good riddance of all prophets.'† They had evidently been taught by their idolatrous parents thus to revile the prophets of Jehovah; and their enmity to him, through attachment to their idols, was become deſperate: and if true religion be important, it was proper to apply ſome effectual remedy to the inveterate evil. If the prophet had curſed the children *in his own ſpirit*, would Jehovah have concurred in his malignity? Were the ſhe-bears at Eliſha's command? Would any conſequences have followed? Had the prophet ſlain the children himſelf, or employed any of his party in putting them to death, *there would have been ſome pretence for* theſe bitter accuſations: but as the caſe ſtands, the juſtice of God is directly arraigned; for he was the only *actor* in the buſineſs.—If the children had died of a fever, the affair would not have been noticed: yet the ſolemnity of the ſentence and execution, while it was no ſeverer puniſhment to them, would operate more uſefully on their ſurvivors. It does not appear on what ground Mr. P. charges the prophet with curſing the children, becauſe they were of the party of Iſrael; unleſs the party of Iſrael mean the party of determined idolaters and profane ſcoffers: for that of Judah was ſurely

* P. ii. p. 36, 57. † 2 Kings ii. 23.

out of the queſtion. And as to his denial of the hiſtory, and his attempt to turn it into ridicule, it contains no argument and requires no anſwer.

EZEKIEL AND DANIEL.*

Mr. P. is of opinion, that the books of Ezekiel and Daniel are genuine: this conceſſion may perhaps ſurpriſe ſuch perſons as are not aware of the fecundity of his genius; eſpecially as Daniel's prophecies have received ſo circumſtantial an accompliſhment, that an ancient oppoſer of Chriſtianity had no way of eſcaping conviction, but by aſſerting, contrary to proof, that they were written after the events predicted in them! But Mr. P. perhaps afraid leſt his readers attention ſhould flag, has prepared a new fund of amuſement, by *imagining* theſe books to contain a *political cypher*, or *ſecret alphabet*, under the pretence of dreams and viſions, and that they relate to plans about recovering Jeruſalem. Hence he infers, that we 'have nothing to do with them;' and provided that be the inference, numbers will excuſe the want of proof and probability.

It is, however, very wonderful, that theſe political devices ſhould contain ſuch animated exhortations and fervent prayers, and above all ſo many prophecies, that have been ever ſince fulfilling! Egypt is become a *baſe* kingdom, and has been ſubject to a foreign yoke almoſt from the time, when the prophet wrote.† Tyre, that proſperous commercial

* P. ii. p. 57—60. † Ezek. xxix. 14, 15.

mercial city is become a place for fiſhermen to dry their nets.* The four great monarchies, Alexander's conqueſts, and the affairs of his ſucceſſors, the cutting off of the Meſſiah, and the deſolations of Jeruſalem after ſeventy weeks, have exactly accompliſhed Daniel's predictions. So that one would almoſt imagine Mr. P. had a mind to make trial of the credulity of mankind, in this whimſical abſurdity!

Ezekiel is ſuppoſed to have been carried captive eleven years before the deſolations of Jeruſalem, and Daniel about eighteen before that event:† and not 'both together, nine years before,' as Mr. P. erroneouſly ſtates it. Daniel was employed at court, and Ezekiel lived as a diſtance, and we do not read of any intercourſe between them. The firſt ſix chapters of Daniel are hiſtorical, and relate to miraculous interpoſitions of God in behalf of his people; ſo that this could not have been a political correſpondence: and no ſingle verſe can be pointed out in the whole book, that gives the moſt remote intimation of a project for recovering Jeruſalem. Many of Ezekiel's viſions, and all Daniel's, are dated after the deſolation of Jeruſalem; when the poor diſperſed captives could have no hope of recovering or rebuilding that city, by any ſtratagem; nay, ſome of Daniel's viſions are dated after the return of the Jews from Babylon, by the decree of Cyrus.

Moſt men, who have thought on the ſubject, will conclude, that Mr. P. had no right to find fault

* Ezek. xxvi. 14. † Ezek. i. 5. Dan. i.

fault with romantic interpretations of ſcripture, after having given the moſt ridiculous expoſition of Ezekiel's viſion, that the world has yet ſeen! His own words may juſtly be retorted on him. 'Such applications of ſcripture, ſhew the fraud or extreme folly to which the credulity of modern infidelity can go!' No believer ever ſuppoſed, that prophets *employed themſelves* about what would happen in diſtant ages; we only maintain 'that they ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt!' Had prophecies been ingenious ſpeculations, by which men diverted themſelves; an afflicted ſtate might have indiſpoſed them for ſuch amuſement: and thus Mr. P. has indeed proved the abſurdity of his own ſuppoſition! But he does not ſeem to be ſo well acquainted with univerſal hiſtory, as to *know*, that Ezekiel's prediction concerning the forty years deſolation of Egypt never came to paſs. It is certain that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt, and carried multitudes of its inhabitants captives; and forty years from that time brings us to the reign of Cyrus; when it is probable the Epyptians, as well as the Jews, were allowed to return home, and inhabit their waſted country.* And is it not more rational to elucidate the obſcurity of hiſtory by this propheſy; than to make the obſcurity of hiſtory an argument againſt a propheſy, of which every other part, as contained in four chapters, has been certainly accompliſhed? Eſpecially *when* the next verſe is fulfilling at this preſent day "Egypt ſhall be the baſeſt of the kingdoms, neither ſhall it exalt itſelf any more among the nations." JONAH.

* Ezek. xxix. 11—14.

JONAH.*

Mr. P's *pun* upon *ſwallowing Jonah and his whale*, is more ſuitable to a *jeſt-book*, than to the *age of reaſon*. His obſervation, that if Jonah had ſwallowed the whale, it would have approached nearer the idea of a miracle (that is, *his* idea of a miracle) is more ſuited to divert the profane, than to convince the conſiderate.

Indeed he ſeems to have been conſcious of this, for in the ſecond part of his work, he beſtows much pains to prove, that the book of Jonah was a gentile fable, intended to ridicule and ſatirize the Jews and their prophets.†

Jonah's conduct, in various particulars, admits of no excuſe; yet it is much eaſier to condemn him, than it would have been to have acted properly in his circumſtances. The mariners deſerve commendation, for their deſire to preſerve his life! but his narrative, and his manner of ſpeaking concerning the Lord, muſt have impreſſed them with awe, leſt they ſhould provoke the God of Iſrael, by putting his ſervant to death. And what propriety is there in Mr. P's taking this occaſion to revile the Bible prophets, and particularly Samuel? —Saul had executed the command of God by Samuel, in ſlaying even the women and children of Amalek; but *out of reſpect to royalty*, he had ſpared Agag, whoſe ſword had made women childleſs. In this ſingle inſtance Samuel who had been long judge of Iſrael, acted with apparent ſeverity: "he hewed

* P. i. p. 59. † P. ii. p. 60—63

hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord :" and this renders Mr. P. ſuch a *royaliſt*, that he goes out of his way to cenſure his conduct, though in all reſpects impartial! The humane counſel of one propliet hath been conſidered ;* and among other inſtances the reader may find a remarkable example in Eliſha.† For humanity to ſtrangers and enemies is not peculiar to Gentiles, though infidels give little credit even to this favorite virtue, when it is exerciſed by believers.

The mariners at firſt called every man upon his god ; but after they had heard the words of Jonah, "they feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a ſacrifice to JEHOVAH, and made vows." They had been idolaters, but probably were converted to the true religion, by what they ſaw and heard on this occaſion.

The Almighty God was certainly able to prepare a great fiſh to ſwallow Jonah, and could preſerve him alive to the third day in its belly ; however profane ſcoffers may ridicule the narrative : nay, the fables of Hercules ſwallowed by a ſea-monſter, and ſhip-wrecked Amphion, carried to ſhore by a dolphin, ſeem to have been derived from the ſtory of Jonah.

Mr. P. calls Jonah's prayer *a made up prayer*, and infers that the ſtory is *a made up ſtory*. *A made up prayer* is a prayer compoſed in ſcriptural language, which is ſurely the beſt that can be : a *made up ſtory* is a *romance*. This is therefore a *pun*, yet it muſt here paſs for an *argument*. But will any reader imagine that a Gentile was more acquaint-

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* 2 Chron. xxviii. † 2 Kings. vi. 20—23.

ed with the Pſalms, whence Jonah's prayer was taken, than a Jewiſh prophet? And ſurely the prayer ſuited his *diſtreſs*, even though it did not mention the whale's belly. The expreſſion, "the Lord ſpake unto the fiſh," may be called *cant language*; but ſober men will think it aptly deſcriptive of the Lord's authority over all creatures.

Jonah's conduct and diſpoſition at Nineveh too much 'reſembled that malevolent ſpirit, that blackneſs of character, which men aſcribe—to the devil:' that is, depraved nature too much ſhewed itſelf. Yet Jonah muſt not be blamed for delivering his meſſage faithfully; nor ſhould all *Bible prophets or predicting prieſts* be condemned for the occaſional miſconduct of an individual; for this likewiſe too much reſembles that being whom we call the devil, or *the falſe accuſer*. The conduct of Jonah is unparalleled in ſcripture: no one there mentioned with approbation, ſhewed ſo proud, angry, impatient, ſelf-ſeeking, and preſumptuous a diſpoſition, as he did.—Jeremiah appealed to the Lord, 'that he had not deſired the woeful day, which he predicted:' he declared, that if the people "would not hear, he would weep in ſecret places for their pride:" and his lamentations evince his ſincerity. Moſes preferred death to the deſtruction of his ungrateful countrymen, even with the greateſt advantage to himſelf and family.—"Rivers of waters ran down David's eyes, becauſe men kept not God's law:" and Paul had continual heavineſs and ſorrow of heart on account of his unbelieving countrymen. So that propheſying evil does not incline men to wiſh for it, becauſe

cauſe all do not prefer their own credit to the glory of God and the happineſs of multitudes, as Jonah did moſt wickedly on one occaſion.

The Creator's *partiality*, if Mr. P. will uſe that word, appears as much in other hiſtories, as in that of the Bible. The Lord does certainly afford advantages to ſome nations and individuals, which he withholds from others; but the ſcripture never repreſents him, as conniving at the ſins of his favored nation, or puniſhing the guiltleſs, becauſe they did not belong to it. On the contrary, he ſays, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will puniſh you for all your iniquities."* The ſatire and moral, therefore of this ſuppoſed fable of Jonah, are obſcure indeed; but the prolific verſatility of Mr. P's genius ſhines with peculiar brilliancy: for his very abſurdities prove him to be no ordinary man.

The *hiſtory* of Jonah is replete with inſtruction, but this is not the place for deducing it. Learned men agree, that three days and three nights, in the Hebrew idiom, denotes any portion of time ending on the third day: and if neither ancient nor modern Jews object *on this ground*, to the application of the hiſtory of Jonah to the death, burial, and reſurrection of Chriſt; it does not ſeem very candid in others to attempt it. Our Lord's teſtimony confirms the whole account; and thus it ſtands on all the evidence of the New Teſtament: and perhaps this may be the reaſon, why Mr. P. hath honored it with ſo large a ſhare of his attention.

As

* Amos iii. 2.

As to the other minor prophets, he leaves them ‘ to ſleep undiſturbed in the laps of their nurſes, the prieſts ;’ content with having ridiculed the idea of greater and leſſer prophets,* which common ſenſe explains to mean no more, than that the books of the latter are much ſhorter than thoſe of the former.

‘ I have now, ſays this confident writer, gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his ſhoulder, and fell trees ;’† but going through a wood with an axe on his ſhoulder differs widely, from cutting down the whole wood ; and Mr. P’s cavils againſt the ſeveral books in the Bible differ widely from ſubverting their authority by unanſwerable arguments. He ſuppoſes that he hath done his work ; yet, “ It is as when an hungry man dreameth that he eateth ; but he awaketh and his ſoul is empty.’ The prieſts need not replant the trees : ‘ there they grow,’ and will grow, when Mr. P’s name will be ſunk into oblivion, or only remembered with aſtoniſhment, that ſuch ſuperficial obſervations, and *ignorant or intentional* miſ-ſtatements, ſhould have excited ſo much attention, as to render it neceſſary for the miniſters of Chriſt to ſpend their valuable time in anſwering them.

For I now appeal to every impartial man, who will beſtow pains fairly to inveſtigate the ſubject, whether Mr. P. has ſubſtantiated a ſingle charge againſt the writers of the Old Teſtament, except as its contents do not accord to men’s common

 opinions ;

* P. i. p. 18. † P. ii. p. 64.

opinions ; its arrangement is not formed on modern notions of method, and ſome trivial alterations have taken place in the text.

Convinced of Mr. P's talents and determined reſolution in his undertakings, and conſcious, that a joyleſs life and hopeleſs death muſt be the conſequence, if the only ſource of my confidence and conſolation could be torn from me : the opening of theſe books excited in me a ſort of trepidation. But I muſt declare, that I never felt a firmer aſſurance that the Bible is the word of God, than I do at this moment ; having found that miſapprehenſion, miſrepreſentation, wit, declamation, and invective, are the ſum total, that the keeneſt capacity and moſt virulent enmity can produce againſt it.

CHAPTER V.

NEW TESTAMENT.

THE GOSPELS.

MR. P. opens his attack on this part of ſcripture, by ſaying, ' the New Teſtament, they tell us, is founded on the prophecies of the Old ; if ſo, it muſt follow the fate of its foundation.'*—Injudicious conceſſions have often been made by the friends

* P. ii. p. 64.

friends of truth, and this ſeems to be one. The prophecies of the Old Teſtament prepared the way for the coming of Chriſt; and, with their accompliſhment in him, conſtitute an unanſwerable proof that Chriſtianity is a divine revelation; and the teſtimony of our Lord and his apoſtles ſo confirm the Old Teſtament, that if ſtrict *demonſtration* could be brought againſt its divine inſpiration, it would reduce believers to great difficulty; but that is impoſſible.—In other reſpects the New Teſtament ſtands on its own baſis; internal and external evidence confirm moſt fully its divine original; and this *alone* might be ſufficient to ſupport the authority of the Old Teſtament alſo, if we had not other proof in abundance. But indeed the two parts of ſcripture give ſtability and ſymmetry to each other. The Old Teſtament led to an expectation of the New, as its completion; the New Teſtament preſuppoſes the truth of the hiſtory, and the divine authority of the laws, ordinances and inſtructions of the Old.

Mr. P. ſays, 'The diſagreement of the parts of a ſtory proves *the whole cannot be true*:* was this ambiguity intended, or incidental? If by *diſagreement, contrariety* be meant, the *whole* cannot be true, when one part diſagrees with another: yet a *great part of it* may be true. The French beheaded Lewis XVI; yet many diſagreements are found among their writers, as to the circumſtances of that event.

A

* P. ii. p. 66.

A man, who has curſorily read the New Teſtament to find weapons againſt it, may decide that 'the hiſtorical part of it, as far as it relates to Jeſus Chriſt, is confined within two years or eighteen months:'* I ſuppoſe this means, from our Lord's entrance on his miniſtry to his aſcenſion: but more accurate ſtudents agree, that this ſpace included at leaſt three years and an half.

Mr. P. admits in an heſitating manner that ſuch a perſon as Chriſt might exiſt; adding that, 'there is no ground either to believe or diſbelieve!'† Indeed! why, was the exiſtence of any one man ſince the creation ſo undeniably proved? It would be comparatively a moderate degree of ſcepticiſm, to doubt the exiſtence of Alexander, Julius Cæſar, or Mahomet: for the effect of their exiſtence, on the ſtate of mankind in all ſucceeding ages, is ſmall, compared with that produced by Chriſtianity: and how could that religion have exiſted, if Chriſt had not exiſted? But, ſays Mr. P. 'It is the fable of Jeſus Chriſt—againſt which I contend.' It would, however, have been far more *reaſonable*, if he had firſt unanſwerably proved the goſpel a fable, before he had called it ſo: though not more *politic*, as confidence paſſes with numbers for demonſtration.

If Mr. P. cannot make out that diſcordance, and thoſe contradictions, which he charges on the ſcriptures, he will doubtleſs divert many readers, by comparing the New Teſtament to 'a

* P. i. p. 20. † P. ii. p. 65.

'a farce of one act.'* Profaneneſs is one neceſſary ingredient in a modern jeſt-book!

It is now generally allowed, that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joſeph in the line of Solomon, and Luke that of Mary in the line of Nathan, ſons of David. The method in uſe among the Jews, in keeping their regiſters, required the name of Joſeph to be inſerted, inſtead of Mary his wife, as conſtituting a link in the chain or pedigree: and it was proper that both genealogies ſhould be given. This ſolution of the difficulty is ſo obvious and ſatisfactory, that it is wonderful any difference in ſentiment ſhould have prevailed among learned men on the ſubject. But the ſtreſs Mr. P. lays upon it, the labour he employs, and the liberal accuſations of lying and contradiction he beſtows on the evangeliſts, would almoſt perſuade one, that he ſuppoſed this variation between Matthew and Luke had never before been diſcovered! The writers of the New Teſtament would not have had common ſenſe, if they had inſerted manifeſt contradictions in their narratives: and forgery could have no occaſion for them, as it would have been very eaſy for one of them to copy from the others. Indeed liſts of names are ſtrange things to forge: though I firmly believe that the evangeliſts wrote by the ſuperintending inſpiration of the Holy Spirit; I ſuppoſe they copied ſuch matters from the public regiſters: and as none of the ancient enemies of Chriſtianity, attempted to diſprove theſe genea-

 logies,

* P. ii. p. 64.

logies, while the original regiſters exiſted; it will be wonderful, if *proof* ſhould now be given that they were falſified.

No more than twenty-ſeven generations are mentioned by Matthew from David to Chriſt, and Mr. P. aſſerts on this account that his genealogy 'is not ſo much as a reaſonable lie:' for he computes that, upon an average, every one in this ſucceſſion lived to an age of forty, before his eldeſt ſon was born. He ſhould have ſaid, his eldeſt ſurviving ſon, if he would have ſpoken to the purpoſe: yet that would have gone too far. Solomon was not David's eldeſt ſon; Abijah was not Rehoboam's:* and it might eſpecially happen after the captivity, that the line ſhould be continued in the younger male branches. We know alſo from the hiſtory, that the three immediate ſucceſſors of Jehoram, ſon of Jehoſhaphat, are omitted in the genealogy; it is uncertain on what account; as is likewiſe Jehoiakim the father of Jeconiah. There were therefore nineteen generations from David to the captivity: and ſimilar omiſſions might occur in the ſubſequent part of the genealogy.

Mr. P. aſſerts, to help his lame argument, that 'Solomon had his houſe full of wives and miſtreſſes at the age of one and twenty.' But where did he learn this? Solomon had one wife when his father died, and ſoon after he married Pharaoh's daughter. He might have many other wives and concubines at the ſame time, for any thing

* 2 Chron. xi. 18—21.

thing we know ; but the ſcripture does not mention them. No wonder Mr. P. ſuſpects other men's teſtimony, when his own aſſertions are ſo frequently unfounded ! As therefore he has not proved, that the evangeliſts *lied* about our Lord's natural genealogy ; his inference reſpecting his miraculous conception falls to the ground.

Mr. P. has changed his mind on this latter ſubject, ſince he wrote the firſt part of his work ;* and charges repeatedly and expreſsly upon it that very blame, from which he formerly exculpated it. I ſhall not tranſcribe his language, which is, I believe, unparalleled ; but I would ſhew it to be wholly a miſrepreſentation, or groſs miſtake. The Holy Spirit or Holy Ghoſt, has hitherto been ſuppoſed to be, either a divine perſon, according to the doctrine of the Trinity ; or a created Spirit of ſupra-angelic dignity ; or a peculiar mode of divine operation : but who ever thought of underſtanding that expreſſion to mean a ghoſt, or departed ſpirit, according to the vulgar acceptation of the word ? The language of ſcripture only teaches us, that the divine power of the Holy Spirit *miraculouſly* produced the human nature of Chriſt, in the womb of the virgin : and that he was thus truly man ; though conceived and born without that defilement, which is communicated to all the natural deſcendants of fallen Adam. And no doubt every prieſt, and every other man, who has any *ſhame* left, would be aſhamed of the *intelligible language*, which Mr. P. uſes

* P. i. p. 7.

uſes on this ſubject: but the whole blame of it, and of all the compariſons, inferences, and jeſts, which it gives riſe to, remains with him alone; for profane and blaſphemous as they are, their falſhood and abſurdity are equal to their impiety.

By *naturally impoſſible*,* nothing more can be meant, than *impoſſible without a miracle:* and men of ſerious reflection may hazard their future happineſs on the belief of well atteſted miracles.

Mr. P. adds, that 'Matthew ſays the angel appeared to Joſeph; Luke ſays, it was to Mary.'† Luke indeed relates, that the angel appeared to Mary, *when awake, previous to her conception:* Matthew informs us, that an angel appeared to *Joſeph in a dream, after Mary was known to be with child.* What a handle for *abuſe* might a man of Mr. P's diſpoſition find, in animadverting on ſuch paſſages!

Had Mary's teſtimony been *ſingle*, it would not have been entitled to credit: but connected with the preceding propheſies, the teſtimony of Zachariah and Elizabeth, and the well known circumſtances attending the birth of John Baptiſt; and confirmed by all the ſubſequent events: it becomes credible in the higheſt degree: for every proof of Chriſtianity authenticates it.

Mr. P. ſays very little, on the diſagreement of the evangeliſts, from the birth to the death of Chriſt; and that little contains not any thing like an argument. Had the four evangeliſts recorded preciſely the ſame miracles, diſcourſes and events, with

* P. ii. p. 69. † P. ii. p. 71.

with the ſame circumſtances, the charge of forgery would have been more plauſible. Suppoſe four men to compoſe each an hiſtory of tranſactions in China or Japan: not writing by concert, but conſcious of integrity and competency, each records ſuch facts as had more immediately fallen under his obſervation, with ſuch circumſtances as moſt engaged his attention; and each follows his own peculiar plan. When theſe hiſtories are publiſhed, events are found recorded in one, which are not mentioned in the other; with *apparent* incongruities, which a little attention may reconcile; and the order of the narrative is not exactly the ſame, in them all. On this ground a man ſtands forth, and affirms that they are impoſtures and contradictory legends. Now ſuppoſe four other men to give each an account of ſome tranſactions in a remote part of the world; and no difference at all is found in their books, but that of ſtyle and manner: and another perſon ſhould on this ground exclaim, 'Theſe men have combined to deceive us; had not this been the caſe, there muſt have been ſome variations in their narrative.' We might leave it to any man of candour to determine which of theſe objections is moſt reaſonable.

Induſtry, ingenuity, and malice have, for ages, been employed, in endeavouring to prove the evangeliſts inconſiſtent with each other: but not a ſingle *contradiction* has been proved upon them. Their circumſtantial variations, in relating the ſame event, only evince that they did not copy from each other. They recorded thoſe facts, which

which moſt impreſſed their minds as important: as they wrote in ſucceſſion, they did not think the preceding hiſtorians needed any vouchers: and it ſuited their deſign, to omit many things for the ſake of brevity, and that they might relate others of equal moment.—But one thing is fact. Theſe four men, of whom ſuch contemptuous things are ſpoken, have done, without appearing to have intended it, what was never performed by any authors before or ſince. They have drawn a perfect human character, without a ſingle flaw! they have given the hiſtory of one, whoſe ſpirit, words, and actions, were in every particular exactly what they ought to have been; who always did the very thing which was proper, and in the beſt manner imaginable! who never once deviated from the moſt conſummate wiſdom, purity, benevolence, compaſſion, meekneſs, humility, fortitude, patience, piety, zeal, and every other excellency! And who in no inſtance let one virtue or holy diſpoſition entrench on another; but exerciſed them all in entire harmony and exact proportion! The more the hiſtories of the evangeliſts are examined, the clearer will this appear: and the more evidently will it be perceived, that they all coincide in the view they give of their Lord's character. This ſubject challenges inveſtigation, and ſets infidelity at defiance! Either theſe four men exceeded in genius and capacity all the writers that ever lived; or they wrote under the ſpecial guidance of divine inſpiration: for without labour or affectation they have effected,

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what hath baffled all others, who have ſet themſelves purpoſely to accompliſh it.

Indeed that man ſeems to have a vitiated taſte in compoſition, who does not admire the ſimplicity connected with ſublimity, with which the evangeliſts record the miracles of Chriſt. I ſhould think that even infidels of genius would be ſtruck with the *manner*, in which ſuch aſtoniſhing events are related.

The ſtory of Herod's ſlaying the children *reſts* on Matthew's teſtimony, and on the proofs of *his divine inſpiration:* it accords perfectly to the character of that bloody tyrant; and it was not neceſſary that the ſucceeding evangeliſts ſhould repeat it. John Baptiſt was born at Hebron, at a conſiderable diſtance from the coaſts of Bethlehem; ſo that Mr. P's attempt to prove from his preſervation, that the ſtory belies itſelf, is ridiculous in the extreme.

Mr. P. intimates,* that Chriſt 'had in contemplation the delivery of the Jewiſh nation from the bondage of the Romans;' and 'that this virtuous reformer and revolutioniſt, who preached equality, loſt his life on that account.' This manifeſtly contradicts the only records from which our information is derived; as well as the exiſting ſtate of things at that time: and our author does not deign to give us any proof in ſupport of his very extraordinary opinion.

He aſſerts likewiſe, that 'Jeſus was not much known when he was apprehended; that he held his

* P. i. p. 9.

his meetings with his followers in ſecret; and that he had given over or ſuſpended preaching publicly.'* Where did he learn this? 'From the evangeliſts; for they relate, that Judas betrayed him, which could not have been neceſſary, had he not lived concealed.' Thus he affects to credit the teſtimony of the evangeliſts in one particular, that he may flatly contradict them in all the reſt of the narrative.

From this ſuppoſed concealment Mr. P. argues that Chriſt ſhewed *puſillanimity*, and did not intend to be apprehended or crucified! Are they, who can credit this *baſeleſs* aſſertion, in direct oppoſition to the very books, on which it is grounded, proper perſons to ridicule Chriſtians for believing without evidence?

Had the evangeliſts undertaken to give an exact copy of the inſcription over the croſs of Chriſt; nothing could have been more eaſy: but they perfectly agree as to the import of it, which is quite ſufficient. Such cavils prove nothing ſo much, as a man's want of better arguments, and his determination to oppoſe a cauſe.†

Mr. P. ſays, that 'Peter was the only one of the men called apoſtles, who appears to have been near the ſpot at the crucifixion.' Yet John tells us, that he witneſſed the whole ſcene, and received the orders of his dying Lord concerning his mother. 'We may infer from theſe circumſtances, trivial as they are,' that this author knows very little about the ſubject on which he writes.

Peter

* P. ii. p. 21. † P. i. p. 72.

Peter denied his Lord with curſing and ſwearing : that is he diſclaimed all acquaintance with him ; but he did not deny him to be the Meſſiah, the Son of the living God. How great ſoever his crime was, his ingenuous confeſſion of it, and his ſubſequent labours and ſufferings in the cauſe of Chriſt, ſufficiently entitle him to credit, in his teſtimony both to the crucifixion and reſurrection : but his teſtimony is a very ſmall part of the evidence on which our faith is ſurely founded.

The ſixth hour, mentioned by John, is ſuppoſed by many to be an accommodation to the Roman method of computing time : but if it be allowed a trivial error in ſome tranſcriber, which might eaſily take place in a numeral letter ; what doubt can that excite in a ſerious mind as to the authenticity of a narrative, atteſted in all its leading parts, by four diſtinct hiſtorians ? Impoſtors would have avoided ſuch obſervable inaccuracies.*

Matthew is generally allowed to have written before the other evangeliſts : had they not therefore credited his account of the miracles attending Chriſt's death, they would have contradicted it : for the circumſtances he related were of ſo extraordinary and public a nature, that they could not have eſcaped detection, had they been falſe.†

Mr. P. calls Luke and Mark *apoſtles*. He *muſt* have ſeen his miſtake, had he only read over the names of the apoſtles :‡ and this may ſhew how

 ſuperficially

* P. ii. p. 71. † P. ii. p. 72. ‡ P. ii. p. 72. 77.

ſuperficially he ſtudied his ſubject ; and how little reaſon he hath to object to the *credibility* of ſcripture hiſtory, on account of minute inaccuracies, real or ſuppoſed.

His wit concerning the ſaints that aroſe, and came out of the graves after our Lord's reſurrection, may amuſe the *profane*, but will not convince the *ſerious*. It would have degraded the ſacred hiſtory to have mentioned ſuch ſubjects, as Mr. P. propoſes in his queſtions. It is enough to quote, on this occaſion, our Lord's anſwer to the frivolous objection of the Sadducees againſt the reſurrection. "Ye do err, not knowing the ſcriptures, nor the power of God." We may indeed add, that there is no reaſonable ground of doubt, but theſe riſen ſaints accompanied their aſcending Lord, to grace his triumphs, as the firſt-fruits of his reſurrection. Mr. P. ſays, 'Had it been Moſes and Aaron, and Joſhua and Samuel, and David,' (ſuppoſing them to have appeared to the people) 'not an unconverted Jew had remained in all Jeruſalem.' But it might be aſked, how the Jews could have *known* theſe riſen ſaints to have been Moſes and Aaron, &c. except by their own teſtimony, or by immediate revelation? But waving this difficulty: the reader has his option, whether he will credit this aſſertion of Mr. P. or the words of Chriſt, "If they believe not Moſes and the prophets, neither would they be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead."

Matthew alone relates the account of the Roman ſoldiers who guarded the ſepulchre: but

does

does this prove, 'that according to the other evangeliſts, *there were none?*' Will not common ſenſe determine, that *their* ſilence allows the truth of *his* narrative? By publiſhing his goſpel, and relating the baſe conduct of the prieſts and rulers, Matthew had openly challenged them to diſprove it if they could: but this they never attempted; and ſurely they would not have endured ſo diſgraceful an imputation, if they had not had ſubſtantial reaſons for their conduct.

The abſurdity of the ſtory, which the rulers put into the mouth of the ſoldiers, is ſufficiently evident: but we may as juſtly blame Mr. P. for re-printing it, as Matthew for publiſhing it. If men act abſurdly, hiſtorians muſt not deviſe falſhoods to cover their abſurdity. The evangeliſt appealed to the whole nation, that the ſtory was notorious; that it had been propagated immediately after the body of Chriſt was miſſing, and that it had continued current till the time when he publiſhed his narrative. It is clear, ſome of the ſoldiers had affirmed, that they were paid for circulating it: none of them were called to account, that we know of, for this or any other part of their conduct: and no man ſtepped forth, to ſay, that ſuch a ſtory had not been propagated, or was not current; that the prieſts had not bribed the ſoldiers to ſpread it; or that they could give a more ſatisfactory account of the manner, in which the body of Jeſus had been removed. How could men have been perſuaded, that ſuch a report had long been current, if they had never before heard it? or that it was ſtill current, if eve-

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ry body knew it was not ſo? Or how could an anonymous writer, or rather one who aſſumed another man's name, have thus appealed to facts, as well known when his work was publiſhed, and for ſome time before, if ſuch facts had been mere forgeries? Mr. P. indeed argues from the expreſſion, "*until this day*," that Matthew did not write the goſpel, and that it was manufactured long afterwards. But *ſeven* or *eight* years, would ſuffice in this caſe, and warrant a man to uſe ſuch words. We have abundant proof of the antiquity and genuineneſs of Matthew's goſpel. But could it be ſhewn to have been publiſhed long afterwards, it would ſtill further eſtabliſh the fact in queſtion: for an appeal to contemporaries ſome ages after, that the report concerning the ſoldiers was commonly circulated till *that day*, muſt be an additional evidence of its truth.

The circumſtances of our Lord's reſurrection, as recorded by the four evangeliſts, have been long known to involve ſome difficulty, and to have the appearance of inconſiſtency: inſomuch, that Celſus, in the *ſecond century*, brings this as an objection to the Chriſtian religion. But Mr. P. by confounding things evidently diſtinct, and uſing various methods of embarraſſing the ſubject, has given the whole an air of ſelf-contradiction, very ſuited to impoſe on the incautious reader: and, as this ſubject is more likely to embarraſs even a ſerious enquirer, than any other in 'The age of Reaſon,' I ſhall endeavour to give a compendious ſtatement of the narrative, as it may be collected by carefully comparing the four evangeliſts.

Mary

Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, or Mary the mother of James and Joſes, Salome, and Joanna, are the women named in the hiſtory; but Luke, having mentioned all the others except Salome, ſays, "there were other women with them." This company, on the evening of our Lord's crucifixion, concerted the plan, and bought the ſpices, for the anointing of his body: and then retiring, probably to ſeparate lodgings, they "reſted the ſabbath day, according to the commandment." But early on the morning after, they ſet out, according to appointment, to *meet at the ſepulchre*; for there is no mention of their previous meeting at any other place: and thus they reached that ſpot at different times. Mary Magdalene ſeems to have ſet out, with the other Mary and Salome, from one place; Joanna, and the other women with her, from another. But Mary Magdalene, being peculiarly fervent in ſpirit, appears to have out-gone her companions, and to have arrived firſt at the ſepulchre, *while it was yet dark*, or at *day-break*:* and, ſeeing the ſtone removed, ſhe ran back to inform Peter. In the mean while the other Mary and Salome reached the ſepulchre; and finding it open, they went in and ſaw the angel, or angels, as recorded by Matthew and Mark. Matthew might mention only one angel, becauſe only one ſpake to the women: but he does not ſay, there was no more than one. The ſame evangeliſt mentions two demoniacks, where Mark ſpeaks but of one; doubt-

* John xxi. 1, 2.

leſs becauſe that one was moſt remarkable, both before and after his diſpoſſeſſion. Though there is no certainty, that Mark did not ſpeak of Joanna and her company—While theſe women returned into the city, Peter and John ſeem to have paſſed them by another road: and coming to the ſepulchre, they ſaw no angels.* But Mary Magdalene, who had followed them, and ſtaid at the ſepulchre when they returned, ſaw two angels, and afterwards Chriſt himſelf: and directly after he appeared to the other Mary and Salome, as they returned to the city.† In the mean time Joanna and her company arrived at the ſepulchre bearing the ſpices, for though the other women are ſaid to have brought the ſpices; yet it ſeems that Joanna, and thoſe accompanying her, carried them to the place. When therefore they firſt entered the ſepulchre, they only obſerved that the body was gone; but afterwards two angels appeared and accoſted them.‡ Then they returned into the city in haſte, and meeting with the apoſtles, before the other women had ſeen them, they informed them of what they had obſerved. Upon which Peter ſet out again to the ſepulchre. About this time the two diſciples ſet out for Emmaus, having only heard the report of theſe women; and neither that of Mary Magdalene, nor that of the other Mary and Salome.§ Theſe at length arriving, informed the apoſtles that they had ſeen Jeſus himſelf: and ſoon after on the ſame day he appeared to Peter alſo.

There

* John xx. 3—18.
† Mat. xxviii. 9—11.
‡ Luke xxiv. 1—9.
§ Luke xxiv. 12—24.

There are other ways of reconciling the *apparent* diſagreement between the evangeliſts, in reſpect of this tranſaction: yet none can certainly ſay, that things occurred exactly in this or the other manner. It ſuffices to ſhew, that things *might* thus happen, and the evangeliſts do not contradict each other. Had the apoſtles been examined in open court, to prove what Mr. P. calls an *alibi*, I am perſuaded the explanations they would have given of the general narrative, would have removed all appearance of inconſiſtency; as this ariſes entirely from the brevity, with which they touched upon the leading circumſtances. It may, however, be obſerved, that the primitive enemies of Chriſtianity were as implacable at leaſt, as any are at preſent; that they were engaged by intereſt and reputation, as well as inclination, to prove the apoſtles falſe witneſſes; that they not only deſired to *crop their ears*, but to put them to death; and that they certainly poſſeſſed more advantages for detecting the impoſture, if there had been any, than Mr. P. can pretend to after 1700 years: yet they never attempted to diſprove the teſtimony of the apoſtles reſpecting the reſurrection, or to ſhew that they contradicted each other.

The variations, in the narratives of the evangeliſts, are in fact no more than what aroſe from the occaſion. Four men, relating the outlines of ſuch an event, with great conciſeneſs, as circumſtances impreſſed their minds, without trying to coincide in their ſeveral accounts, will always ſeem to diſagree to the ſuperficial obſerver. Such abſtracts muſt appear in ſome meaſure abſtruſe to

ſtrangers;

ſtrangers; and eſpecially in future ages: but if fuller inveſtigation remove the difficulties, they rather confirm, than invalidate, the leading facts which they concur to eſtabliſh. Let any man conſult Rapin, Hume, Burnet, and Macauley, upon ſome part of the Engliſh hiſtory which they have all written: and he will find, even where prejudices have not miſled them, that circumſtancial variations will be diſcoverable, which require pains to reconcile, and to form into one conſiſtent narrative, without omitting the moſt minute particular.

We do not pretend, that the inſpired hiſtorians were changed into elegant methodical writers: but that they were preſerved from error, miſrepreſentation, or material omiſſion. Should their narratives, therefore, not ſtand the ordeal of criticiſm, as to the arrangement and manner of compoſition, it would not at all affect the argument: nay, it ſuits the plan of the divine government, as "taking the wiſe in their own craftineſs," to give proud cavillers ſome *pretence* for their infidelity, which at the ſame time is eaſily obviated to the conviction of the humble.

Some detached remarks muſt be added on Mr. P's miſrepreſentations of the ſubject. The different accounts given by the evangeliſts of the *time*, when the women arrived at the ſepulchre, may be reconciled by conſidering that they did not all come together. In general none reached the ſpot before the *day-break*, none after *ſun-riſe*; and minute exactneſs, in ſuch things, is not at all requiſite to hiſtorical truth.

Mr.

Mr. P. cannot believe *ſcripture* concerning Mary Magdalene's piety : but he can credit *tradition* reſpecting her previous bad character, when it can give occaſion to a moſt unbecoming reflection on her conduct ! The ſcripture ſays not a word, in derogation from Mary's moral character ; unleſs her poſſeſſion by ſeven devils be deemed a proof of it : and if that be admitted as evidence, what muſt we think of him who had the legion ? The woman who was a ſinner* is not certainly known to be Mary Magdalene. Matthew alone mentions the angel's rolling away the ſtone ; but all the other evangeliſts ſay it was *rolled away :* ſo that in fact they confirm his teſtimony. Matthew ſays the angel ſat on the ſtone : Mr. P. ſays, that 'according to the others, *there was no angel ſitting on it ;*'† but is ſilence contradiction ? The angel ſat on the ſtone, when he appeared to the *keepers*, or Roman ſoldiers ; "and for fear of him, they became as dead men !" But they had ſo far recovered themſelves, as to flee from the place, before any of the women arrived ; for they ſaw nothing of them : and the angel then appeared, *not on the ſtone, but in the ſepulchre.* Mr. P. indeed ſays, that the 'watch fled *after* the converſation, which the women had had with the angel ſitting upon the ſtone :' but this is wholly his own invention, for which there is not the leaſt ground in the hiſtory, nay which is abſolutely incompatible with it.

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* Luke vii. † P. ii. p. 74, 75.

He alſo confounds the viſion of angels to Mary Magdalene, at her *ſecond* coming to the ſepulchre, with that of the angel or angels to the other women, when they came thither the *firſt time*:* and he writes as if angels were immoveable like rocks; as if it were impoſſible for a *ſingle* angel to appear on one occaſion, and *two* on another; and as if the angels and Chriſt could not *both* ſpeak to the women. So ingenious is he in finding out contradictions! and ſo ready at running into the moſt egregious miſtakes, or moſt perverſe miſrepreſentations!

'Thomas—as they ſay, would not believe, without having ocular and manual demonſtration; *ſo neither will I*: and the reaſon is as good for me, and for every other perſon, as for Thomas!'† Moſt certainly, becauſe it was good for nothing in Thomas; but he was guilty of a moſt abſurd incredulity. He that will not believe the combined teſtimony of ſeveral unexceptionable witneſſes, is an obſtinate unreaſonable ſceptic: and, if he carry his principles into temporal concerns, he muſt ceaſe from buſineſs, food, and medicine, and die like a wrong headed fanatic; becauſe he cannot have ocular or manual demonſtration, that he ſhall not be cheated in all his concerns, or poiſoned by his cook or apothecary. In reſpect of another world, and its infinite concerns, the required proof cannot be had, till it be for ever too late.

In

* John xx. 1—13. † P. i. p. 9.

In order to prove the evangeliſts *liars*, Mr. P. miſ-quotes the words of Matthew; inſtead of "*behold he goeth*," or *is going*, he writes, "behold Chriſt *is gone* into Galilee:" though the ſame evangeliſt juſt after mentions his meeting the women! Matthew indeed ſays, "Then the eleven diſciples went into Galilee:" but he does not ſay that they *went on the day, when Chriſt aroſe*; how then does he contradict the account of John? John certainly tells us a *different* ſtory, when he relates our Lord's meeting the aſſembled diſciples in the evening at Jeruſalem: but not a *contrary* one; as Mr. P. pretends, when he aſſerts, that 'according to Matthew, the eleven were *marching into Galilee*; and according to John, they were met in *another place*.' Could this writer be ſo ignorant to *believe himſelf*, when he penned this paſſage?

It appears from John, that the apoſtles ſtaid at leaſt eight days at Jeruſalem, after our Lord's reſurrection: for it was ſo long before Thomas was convinced, and owned Chriſt as his Lord and his God: and this does not at all diſagree with Matthew's compendious narrative. But Mr. P. boldly ſays,* 'It appears *from the evangeliſts*, that the whole ſpace of time, from the crucifixion to what is called the aſcenſion, is but a few days, apparently not more than three or four; and all the circumſtances are reported to have happened nearly about the *ſame ſpot*.' Either Mr. P. is more ignorant of the writings, which he would

expoſe,

* P. ii. p. 8.

expoſe, than any other author ever was of his ſubject, or elſe he wilfully aſſerts what he knows to be falſe. No man, who reads the evangeliſts, can help ſeeing, that much longer time than three or four days, was taken up in theſe tranſactions, and that ſome of them occurred at the ſea of Tiberias in Galilee, at leaſt ſixty or ſeventy miles diſtant from Jeruſalem. The writer of the Acts of the Apoſtles ſays expreſsly that our Lord continued forty days on earth, previous to his aſcenſion; and that the apoſtles began to preach on the feaſt of Penticoſt, that is fifty days after Chriſt's reſurrection.

But what could induce our author to venture aſſertions ſo manifeſtly erroneous? His motive muſt be left: but by crowding the events of forty days within *two*; (for almoſt two of the four paſſed between the crucifixion and the reſurrection) he gets an opportunity of ridiculing the ſcripture narrative, and of giving ſpecioufneſs to his invectives againſt the evangeliſts! Yet, while he ſays, that 'all the circumſtances *are reported* to have happened nearly about the *ſame ſpot*, he affirms, that according to Matthew, the eleven were marching into Galilee, on the day of the reſurrection.' Does he then ſuppoſe Galilee to be nearly about the *ſame ſpot* as Jeruſalem?

To add to this unaccountable jumble of *ignorance*, miſtake, or miſrepreſentation, Mr. P. again numbers Luke among the apoſtles: and ſuppoſing him to have been on the road to Galilee, on the day of our Lord's reſurrection: he was right in

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alſo ſuppoſing, that he could not at the ſame time be in an houſe in Jeruſalem!

I own, that my patience is nearly exhauſted, by this inveſtigation; and I fear many of my readers will not be able or willing to accompany me through it. Yet I muſt ſay, that it is the fulleſt evidence of our author's utter incompetency, *in one way or other*, for his undertaking, that can poſſibly be conceived. For he profeſſes to deduce his materials from the evangeliſts: yet even a child may ſee that he wholly miſtakes or falſifies them! A little more perſeverance in the reader will carry him through the thicket, and then I hope we ſhall come to ſomething more intereſting.

Mr. P. intimates, that our Lord appointed the meeting in Galilee, on the very evening of his reſurrection; and perhaps ſome of his readers may ſuppoſe Galilee to have been but a ſhort walk from Jeruſalem: and he ſays, that 'Luke tells a ſtory,' (concerning the diſciples at Emmaus,) 'which totally invalidates the account of his going to the mountain in Galilee.' No doubt it invalidates Mr. P's account of Chriſt and his diſciples going on *the ſame day* into Galilee: and in this way, if a man cannot find contradictions, he may manufacture them at pleaſure. But does not every attentive and candid man perceive, that the apoſtles might ſtay a week or ten days at Jeruſalem, where Chriſt might repeatedly meet them in a private room: that then they might journey into Galilee, and meet him with numbers of thoſe who had formerly known him: and that after-

wards, returning to Jeruſalem, they might witneſs his aſcenſion? On this ground I therefore challenge Mr. P. to prove one contradiction or inconſiſtency, in this part of the narrative; and he muſt either do this, or own his miſtakes, or be contented with the character of a falſe accuſer of the evangeliſts.

He next objects to the '*ſkulking* privacy of our Lord's appearance, in the *receſs* of a mountain, or in a *ſhut up houſe* in Jeruſalem.'* The prepoſition, however, which the evangeliſt uſes, in reſpect of the mountain in Galilee, is exactly the ſame with which he introduces the ſermon on the Mount. 'He went up *into a mountain*"—A ſituation ſimilar to that, from which he addreſſed an immenſe multitude, could not be a *ſkulking privacy*, or the *receſs* of a mountain. Such things would be unworthy our notice, did they not ſhew the *fairneſs* of our antagoniſt! but the management is worthy of the cauſe!

The Galileans, among whom our Lord had principally lived, were the moſt proper witneſſes of his reſurrection: and it cannot reaſonably be queſtioned, but that on this occaſion he was ſeen of five hundred brethren at once: when by reaſon of the diſtance, probably, ſome *ſtill doubted*, till further evidence convinced them. But the inhabitants of Jeruſalem were leſs capable of recognizing his perſon: yet they ſaw what may be conſidered as equivalent, in the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt on the apoſtles, and the ſubſequent effects. Mr.

* P. ii. p. 79.

Mr. P. would likewiſe inſinuate that Chriſt appeared but *once*: for he ſays, 'This pretended reappearance of Chriſt, whether in the receſs of a mountain in Galilee, or in a ſhut-up houſe in Jeruſalem was ſtill *ſkulking*.' But, to contradict all the writers, to whom a man refers as his authority, is a ſtrange method of proving that they contradict one another!

Important reaſons have often been aſſigned, for the ſelection of a competent number of witneſſes to teſtify our Lord's reſurrection, while God himſelf confirmed their teſtimony by miracles: in preference to his public appearance to the rulers and people of the Jews. Had this been done, and had the ſcribes, elders, and prieſts perſiſted in rejecting him; the teſtimony of the apoſtles would have laboured under many additional diſadvantages, among other nations, and with future ages. Had they unanimouſly embraced the goſpel, the whole would have had the appearance of a ſcheme for aggrandizing the nation. In either caſe the evidence to us could not in the leaſt have been augmented: for we ſhould have had only the teſtimony of the individuals who recorded thoſe events; and theſe would at leaſt have been as liable to objections and cavils as they now are.

Mr. P. has aſſerted that we have only the evidence of eight or nine perſons to Chriſt's reſurrection.* Moſt certainly there were many more witneſſes of this event: yet that number, of competent and creditable perſons, would be deemed

* P. i. p. 8.

deemed ſufficient to prove any *poſſible* fact, before the moſt ſcrupulous judge or jury in the world. But the proof of our Lord's reſurrection will be ſeparately conſidered.

Mr. P. remarks, 'that Paul *only* ſays five hundred ſaw Chriſt at once, and that the five hundred do not ſay it for themſelves.'* Was it to be expected that theſe five hundred perſons ſhould write as many books, to declare they ſaw the riſen Saviour? If they had, we ſhould have been almoſt five hundred times over as much perplexed, as we now are, in order to determine whether they were genuine or not. But Paul, by appealing to at leaſt near three hundred living witneſſes at once, put it into the power of his enemies to diſprove his confident aſſertion, had it not been true: and as it has never been contradicted, it is equivalent to the teſtimony of multitudes. But Mr. P. aware that Paul's teſtimony is very important, endeavours to ſet him aſide; for he ſays, 'his evidence is like that of a man, who comes into a court of juſtice to ſwear, that what he hath ſworn before is falſe. A man may often ſee reaſon, and he has always too a right of changing his opinion; but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.' True, a man has no liberty or power *to change matters of fact;* but ſurely he may *change his opinion concerning them!* Otherwiſe Mr. P's book can anſwer no purpoſe; for his readers, having once thought the facts recorded in ſcripture to be true, muſt not change their opinion about them.

Paul,

* P. ii. p. 78.

Paul, by crediting the goſpel, which he once hated, only altered his opinion concerning matters of fact; without being ſo abſurd as to think of altering the facts themſelves: and when he atteſted what he had before denied; he only declared himſelf convinced, and that he had altered his opinion, reſpecting the reſurrection of Chriſt, and conſequently the truth of Chriſtianity. Moſt heartily do I pray God, that Mr. P. may thus alter his opinion concerning theſe facts; and moſt readily will I allow him the full liberty of ſo doing. And having oppoſed Chriſtianity, "ignorantly and in unbelief;" ſhould he obtain mercy, and be convinced on more mature enquiry, that the goſpel is the power of God to ſalvation: he will I ſuppoſe, not only be at liberty, but bound in conſcience, to publicly recant that ſolemn oath, by which he confirms his deiſtical creed.* In this caſe, probably moſt men of ſober mind would think him an unexceptionable witneſs in the cauſe: eſpecially, if he fully laid before the world, thoſe arguments by which he had been convinced of his miſtake, and unreſervedly took ſhame to himſelf for his former groundleſs and violent enmity to the truth.

Let us put a parallel caſe—Suppoſe a man to have ſworn in court againſt the life of his neighbour: ſhould he afterwards repent, come to the magiſtrate, voluntarily confeſs his perjury; own that he deſerved the ſevereſt puniſhment, and was prepared to ſubmit to it; and atteſt on oath, that

* P. ii. p. 80.

he knew the condemned perſon to be perfectly innocent of the crime of which he had been accuſed: would any one reject this recantation, under the idea, that the man had no ſuch liberty in matters of fact?

Mr. P. ſays, 'the ſtory of Jeſus Chriſt appearing after he was dead, is the ſtory of an apparition:' and then he enlarges about ghoſts, and ſtories of ghoſts, and proprietors of the ghoſt, &c.* But when our Lord required his diſciples to examine his hands and his ſide; he ſurely precluded all reaſonable ground for objections of this kind. If by a *miraculous* power he entered the room, not without *opening the door*, but without its being *opened for him;* and if he diſappeared, or ceaſed to be ſeen of them, after they had ſeen and handled that very body which had been crucified, and thoſe hands, and feet, and that ſide which had been pierced: what proof do theſe circumſtances afford that it was an apparition? Muſt a riſen body be ſubject exactly to the ſame things, as our dying bodies are? May not God exert his power as he ſees good? Who told our author, that Jeſus was hungry? He ate and drank to prove that he was truly a living man: but it does not follow that he needed meat and drink. The reality of the apoſtles miſſion, did not at all reſt on the Jews ſeeing Chriſt aſcend; but on the miracles, which they were enabled to work before the people, after the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt: yet the conſiſtent teſtimony of twelve unexceptionable witneſſes, to

words

* P. ii. p. 82, 83.

words *ſpoken in a cellar*, or actions done *upon a mountain*, is evidence *in public*, ſufficient to prove any thing which is not impoſſible ; notwithſtanding Mr. P. aſſerts the contrary :* but if a man will not believe till there be no *poſſibility of denial or diſpute ;* the light of eternity alone can convince him. There is proof enough of our Lord's aſcenſion, to ſatisfy reaſonable men : and the only wiſe God did not aſk counſel either of ancient or modern ſadducees, what kind and degree of evidence it was proper for him to afford.

No man could be ignorant, that the apoſtles preached the aſcenſion of Chriſt : it was not therefore *neceſſary* that Matthew ſhould particularly mention it. But Mark was led to atteſt it, for the benefit of future ages ; and Mr. P. ſays that he ' paſſes it off in a careleſs ſlovenly manner, with a ſingle daſh of his pen ; as if he were tired of romancing, or aſhamed of his ſtory : ſo alſo does the writer of Luke.' And again Mark ſays (as a ſchool boy would finiſh a dull ſtory) " So then after the Lord had ſpoken to them, he was received up into heaven, and ſat at the right hand of God." Verily I think this brief and clear narrative wants no apology, and that Mr. P's objections require no anſwer : at leaſt I can ſee nothing careleſs, ſlovenly, dull, or like a man weary, or aſhamed of his ſubject, in this ſimple atteſtation of an event, which could not poſſibly be explained, and which is the ſubject of adoring faith, and not of curious enquiry.

The

* P. ii. p. 79.

The account given by Luke is rather more full (if that in the beginning of the Acts be alſo included;) yet the ſame obſervation holds good in reſpect of it likewiſe: but Mr. P. tries to prove, that the two evangeliſts diſagree between themſelves.* He ſays, that 'according to Mark, Chriſt appeared to the eleven as they ſat at meat, alluding to *the meeting* at Jeruſalem: but the writer of Luke ſays, that the aſcenſion was from Bethany.' Does he then ſuppoſe, that Chriſt aſcended on the very day, on which he roſe? for *the meeting* at Jeruſalem, to which he often refers, was that very evening. But we allow, that *a meeting* of Chriſt with his diſciples took place at Jeruſalem, juſt before his aſcenſion: from which place "he led them forth as far as to Bethany," whence he aſcended. Bethany was leſs than two miles from Jeruſalem: where then is the diſagreement between the evangeliſts?—John, who evidently wrote his goſpel as a ſupplement to the others, incidentally mentions the aſcenſion, though he does not hiſtorically record it.†—Mr. P. alludes on this occaſion, to the aſcent of a balloon.‡ Now I would aſk any reaſonable man, whether he doubts the fact of men having aſcended into the air, by means of a balloon, becauſe he never ſaw it? The evidence given, that it hath been done, ſatisfies my mind as completely, as if I had witneſſed the ſcene; and I am as ſure of it, as to all practical purpoſes.

In

* P. ii. p. 79, 80. † John vi. 62. xx. 17. ‡ P. i. p. 8.

In anſwer to Mr. P's affectation of wit, and his enquiries reſpecting the way in which our Lord was provided with clothes after his reſurrection, and what became of them when he aſcended; with his ingenious ſuppoſition that Elijah's mantel was made of ſalamander's wool; I ſhall only ſay, that if any man can read ſuch contemptible ſtuff, without diſguſt and indignation, he is too far gone for ſober argument, and I ſhould deſpair of gaining his attention.

Mr. P. ſo confidently charges *contradictions* upon the evangeliſts, and ſo vehemently reviles them as liars and impoſtors on that account, that I have been ſcrupulous, not to paſs by any thing, which has the leaſt appearance of inconſiſtency: for I agree with him, that it is impoſſible to unite inſpiration and contradiction. But I affirm, with a confidence equal to *his*, that he has not proved, and that he cannot prove, a ſingle contradiction upon the evangeliſts; ſo that his firſt propoſition,* that the writers of the goſpel were not eye witneſſes, or ear witneſſes of the facts they relate, falls unſupported to the ground;—and we thank him for his ſecond propoſition, that they acted not by *concerted* impoſition; and nothing he has ſaid in the leaſt diſproves our opinion, that they wrote by divine inſpiration.

It is obſervable that Mr. P. cannot find any avowed *oppoſer* of Chriſtianity, previous to A. D. 400, that denied the goſpels to be authentic hiſtories: the fact is, that Celſus in the ſecond century,

* P. ii. p. 84.

tury, Porphyry in the third, and Julian in the fourth, admitted it, and argued againſt the Chriſtians on other principles. Mr. P. is therefore welcome to Fauſtus, as a coadjutor in this undertaking: for he came too late to diſprove by mere aſſertion, what both friends and enemies had agreed in for nearly four hundred years.* Fauſtus was a Manichean; he contended that Matthew did not write the goſpel which bears his name; becauſe he is always *mentioned in the third perſon*; and he has been generally treated as a very ignorant, or a very diſhoneſt man, for this attempt. M. P. is alſo welcome to all the help that forged goſpels can give him: for forgery always implies the exiſtence of the thing counterfeited, and commonly its excellency likewiſe. And the hereticks, who, *at the commencement of Chriſtianity, rejected as falſe all the New-Teſtament*, at leaſt teſtified that the book *then* exiſted and was generally deemed authentic and divine; though they refuſed to ſubmit to its authority. This therefore makes againſt Mr. P.—Whether the ſtory of Chriſt be *wretchedly told* or not, every reader will judge for himſelf; and perhaps many may be of opinion, that prieſts have been as learned as the author of the Age of Reaſon. The inducements to forgery, in the primitive times, were poverty, ſtripes, contempt, impriſonment, and martyrdom!—The ſneers of Mr. P. at *poſſeſſions*, may excite the laughter of ſome readers; but it proves nothing: and the ridiculous declamation about types and prophecies is unworthy of an anſwer. If the key

and

* P. ii. p. 84, 85.

and the lock actually fit together, notwithſtanding the greateſt intricacy of wards, will the word *picklock* prove they were not made for each other ?*

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Mr. P. has ſcarcely ſaid any thing about this book, but that it is *anonymous* and *anecdotal*.† But it is in fact an avowed appendix to St. Luke's Goſpel, and inſcribed to the ſame perſon. The word *anecdotal* is here and elſewhere choſen inſtead of *hiſtorical*; probably becauſe *anecdotes* are generally conſidered as detached, frivolous, and uncertain ſtories. The book is, however, of more conſequence in the argument, than this ſlight notice ſeems to intimate: for it certainly gives us a moſt diſtinct, and probable account of an undeniable fact, which it is impoſſible by any other means to account for, namely, the ſucceſs of Chriſtianity, after the crucifixion of its founder, in oppoſition to all the authority, learning, and religion of the world, by the labours of a few poor fiſhermen, and others of the ſame obſcure rank in the community. Admit this narrative to be true, and the reſurrection of Chriſt, with the divine authority of the ſcriptures is eſtabliſhed beyond diſpute; deny it; and beſides the difficulty of diſproving ſo long received an hiſtory, it becomes neceſſary to give ſome other probable account of the *early* prevalence of the goſpel, which is rendered indiſputable by the teſtimony of Pagan writers.

The

* P. ii. p. 87—89. † P. i. p. 23.

The converſion of St. Paul belongs alſo to this book; in which Mr. P. ſays, 'there was nothing miraculous or extraordinary; he was ſtruck down with lightning.'* Does he mean, that the light above the brightneſs of the ſun, the articulate voice, calling to Saul by name and diſcourſing with him, and the other circumſtances of the apoſtle's narrative were not miraculous? or merely that there is nothing miraculous in Mr. P's own account of the event, which he has learned after near 1800 years from better authority?—The extraordinary change in the conduct and principles of Paul were notorious to all the world: and his own hiſtory of the manner in which it took place muſt be deemed authentic, till it either be proved *falſe*, or *impoſſible*. He gave ſufficient proof, that he did not attempt to impoſe on others: and the facts he relates, were of ſuch a nature, as to exclude the poſſibility of his being himſelf deceived: while his ſubſequent blindneſs for three days, and the ſilence of his companions, who would have *contradicted his account*, had it been falſe, combine to eſtabliſh it.

Mr. P. objects to Paul's teſtimony to Chriſtianity, becauſe he was a zealot; or in other words he ſpake and acted as a man in earneſt. So then, no man is an unexceptionable witneſs, who thoroughly believes his own teſtimony, and is ready to lay down his life in confirmation of it! The difference between a *fact* and a *doctrine* in this caſe is not to the purpoſe: for admit the *facts*, by which the apoſtle was convinced that Jeſus of Nazareth

was

* P. ii. p. 89, 90.

was the Meſſiah ; and the *doctrine* which he preached muſt be owned to be divine. That he had been *extremely* prejudiced and violent againſt Chriſtianity muſt be allowed ; and this renders his converſion the more wonderful ; but that he ran into extremes, in his zeal for the goſpel, does not at all appear; at leaſt his vehement zeal was gentle, loving, patient, and prudent ; and he ſeemed diſpoſed to treat no one with ſeverity, except himſelf.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL.

Mr. P. ſeems to have very little examined this part of ſcripture ; for he ſcarcely notices any particular in it, except the apoſtle's diſcourſe concerning the reſurrection. He ſays, 'The doctrine he *ſets out* to *prove by argument*, is the reſurrection of the ſame body ; and he advances this as an evidence of immortality !'* St. Paul does not *ſet out* with this ſubject, as every man muſt know that reads his epiſtles : and though he *illuſtrates* the doctrine of the reſurrection, and *argues* concerning it, yet he declares that he received it by revelation from Jeſus Chriſt, and delivered it to the Corinthians in his name. Neither does he adduce it as an *evidence* of immortality, but as an additional diſcovery concerning a future and eternal ſtate.

Mr. P. ſays, 'If I have already died in this body, and am raiſed again in the ſame body, it is preſumptive evidence I ſhall die again.' This objection entirely coincides with the cavil of the ancient

* P. ii. p. 90.

Sadducees, and requires no other anſwer, than that by which our Lord put them to ſilence.* Certainly Mr. P's view of a reſurrection is gloomy enough: but the apoſtle's doctrine of "this mortal putting on immortality, and this corruptible putting on incorruption," has a very different aſpect.—Mr. P. aſſures us that he ſhould prefer a 'better body, with a more convenient form;' and thinks that every animal has in many reſpects the advantage of us. I apprehend ſome deiſts may ſo far reverence a Creator, as to deem his language on this ſubject reprehenſible, and favoring of ingratitude: nay, perhaps they may be diſpoſed to conteſt the matter, and to maintain that the erect ſtructure of the human body beſt ſuits the rational nature; and that the aſtoniſhing advantages which our *hands* afford us, give us a decided pre-eminence over all other creatures here below. But however this may be decided; we have ſuch bodies as it hath pleaſed God, in this world; and we muſt exiſt in another according to his good pleaſure, whatever we may *chooſe* or hope.

Mr. P's opinion that the apoſtle's diſcourſe† is 'doubtful jargon—as deſtitute of meaning as the tolling of the bell at the funeral,' will not be generally acceded to. He might have found out St. Paul's meaning if he had honeſtly ſought it with as much diligence, as he has uſed in burleſquing it. I am ſure *his* language on this ſubject muſt appear jargon to every man of ſober underſtanding: and therefore no anſwer can be required. He next re-

torts

* Matt. xxii. 23—34. † 1 Cor. xv.

torts the apoſtle's words upon him, and repeatedly calls him a *fool!* The Judge of the world muſt decide on which part the folly lies. But had Mr. P. duly conſidered the nature of *death*, which is not *abſolutely ceaſing to exiſt*, but *ceaſing to exiſt in the former manner:* he would, as a naturaliſt have ſeen, that except *ſeeds die*, they are not quickened. "Unleſs they *die*, they abide alone," as our Lord alſo ſays; who is thus involved with the apoſtle in our author's peremptory charge. The ſeed, before it grows, ceaſes as much to be a grain of corn, as a man at death ceaſes to be a living man; and is as abſolutely irrecoverable to its former mode of exiſtence by any human power: yet it ſprings up into a new life, incomprehenſibly, by the power of God; as men will riſe at the laſt day. So that the illuſtration is ſufficiently juſt and clear; even though *ingenuity* can find out ſome ſhades of difference, with which men in general are wholly unacquainted.

The reſt of the epiſtolary writings are paſſed over by our author, with the ſame kind of neglect as he ſhewed to the minor prophets; except that he inſinuates they were *forged*, and pretends that they are of no conſequence in the argument; which will be conſidered in another place.

I ſuppoſe, his wit, in ſaying, 'the whore of Babylon has been the common whore of all the prieſts; and each has accuſed the other of keeping the ſtrumpet,' is intended as his confutation of the Apocalypſe. For this ſally, and an aſſertion, 'that it is a book of riddles, which requires a revelation to explain it,' is all that he advances

concerning

concerning this part of ſcripture. Yet the numerous predictions it contains, and the undeniable accompliſhment which many of them have received, amounts to a complete moral demonſtration, that it is the word of God.

Having gone through Mr. P's objection to the New Teſtament, I muſt declare my complete aſſurance, that, after all his moſt confident declamations about contradictions, lies, and impoſtures, he has not ſubſtantiated one ſingle charge. And it would be eaſy to retort upon him; for the inſtances of diſingenuity, miſrepreſentation, wilful calumny, or aſtoniſhing ignorance of the ſubject, which have been pointed out, are very numerous; and more might be produced were that neceſſary. And thus I leave the matter to the judgment of the candid and impartial reader.

I ſhall now proceed, in a ſecond book, to call the reader's attention to ſeveral important ſubjects, which Mr. P. has touched upon; and which are not peculiar to any part of ſcripture, but relate in ſome meaſure to the whole of the ſacred oracles. In doing this, I mean both to exhibit the great outlines of that poſitive proof, on which I believe the divine inſpiration of the ſcriptures, and the real nature and tendency of the religion contained in them; endeavouring in this way, to clear theſe ſubjects from that obſcurity and perplexity, in which our antagoniſt has contrived to involve them.

BOOK

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

REVELATION.

'REVELATION, when applied to religion, means ſomething communicated *immediately* from God to man.'* By this definition Mr. P. begs the queſtion: for if revelation mean an *immediate* communication from God to man, then indeed nothing communicated from God to us, by the intervention of other men, whether ſpeaking or writing, can be properly ſo called. This definition may, however, be admitted, in reſpect of the *original ſource*, whence all revelation is derived: but if it pleaſed God, *immediately* to communicate to one man, what he meant him to declare to others in his name, and to *authenticate by proper credentials*; the real, or generally received ſenſe of the word *revelation* will be preſerved, though it be communicated from one man to another, over the whole

* P. i. p. 5, 6.

earth, and to the lateſt ages. The doctrine or precept came originally from God by *immediate* communication, and was no human diſcovery or impoſition.

Mr. P. allows that God has the power to make ſuch a communication, if he pleaſes; but thinks it improbable he ever ſhould;* and he is confident that God *cannot* enable the man, who firſt receives this communication, to authenticate it to any other perſon, ſo as to render belief of it a duty. This is a very extraordinary aſſertion! I am able to ſend a meſſage or a letter by a ſervant, or in ſome other way; and to give *full aſſurance* to a perſon at a diſtance, that it comes from me. I can make my will, and ſo atteſt it, that, after my death, all parties concerned ſhall be entirely ſatisfied, that it was *my* act and deed; and yet the omnipotent and eternal God *cannot* ſend a meſſage or make known his will, by the intervention of any ſervant or meſſenger! Is this reaſon, or abſurd and daring preſumption? To ſupport ſuch a ſyſtem, it was neceſſary to *aſſert* that miracles are impoſſible, and prophecies impoſtures and lies; and then to affirm that we have no proof but *hearſay*, of any ſuppoſed revelation! On this ground Mr. P. may ſtand; provided he can *demonſtrate* his principles; but if they be merely *aſſumed* and *falſe*, it muſt ſink under him. For if a man come with the rod of Moſes in his hand, as well as "thus ſaith the Lord," in his mouth; the miracles he performs are the ſeal of his miſſion, and his teſtimony can no longer be called *hearſay and aſſertion*. Mr.

* P. ii. p. 95, 96.

Mr. P. ventures on another definition of *revelation*; and he says, 'It is a communication of something which the person did not know before.'* This is extremely vague and inaccurate; for at this rate, every accession to our knowledge, however obtained, might be called a revelation, which surely will not help us to affix right ideas to words. This might have passed unnoticed, had not our author, inferred from it, 'that all the historical and *anecdotal* part of the Bible, is not within the compass of the word *revelation*, and therefore is not the word of God.' How this *inference* would follow from his *premises* does not appear; but indeed the proposition itself is futile and false. God may reveal past events, of which no other information could be obtained. "By faith," and consequently by revelation, "we understand that the worlds were framed by the power of God &c."† Whatever traditionary information Moses might receive, concerning the creation, the fall, the deluge, and other events preceding his own time, he doubtless was immediately instructed, and guided by an *infallible superintending inspiration* in recording them. This was needful to enable him entirely to distinguish between truth and error in tradition; to know such things as had not been retained in the memory of mankind; and to form a history fully adequate to the ends proposed. In like manner, a similar superintending influence would be requisite, to preserve the sacred historians from falling into error or misrepresentations, through forgetfulness

or

* P. i. p. 14. † Heb. xi. 3.

or prejudice, even in reſpect of thoſe facts, of which they had perſonal knowledge: and it would be ſtill more neceſſary, when their information was received from others, either by word or writing. So that the idea of *revelation* in its more general meaning, does not ſuppoſe the writer to be wholly ignorant of his ſubject, or to make no uſe of his knowledge and opportunities; but merely, that the infallible ſuperintending inſpiration of the Holy Spirit preſerved him from errors and prejudices, and all other cauſes of miſapprehenſion or falſhood, and immediately communicated ſuch things as he would otherwiſe have omitted, through ignorance or forgetfulneſs.

I am induced to ſtand this ground, in reſpect of the divine inſpiration of every part of the ſcriptures: becauſe the ſacred penmen, for themſelves and for each other, expreſsly and conſtantly claim it; ſo that their writings are together called the oracles of God. It is evident, that the Jewiſh ſcriptures, in the days of Chriſt and his apoſtles, were nearly if not entirely the ſame, as the Old Teſtament is at preſent: yet they are continually quoted in the New Teſtament, in a peculiar manner, as divine inſpiration. And if we allow this to the hiſtorical part of the Old Teſtament; we can hardly deny it to the writings of the apoſtles and evangeliſts, which contain the *only* account extant in the world of the origin and ſucceſs of Chriſtianity. The apoſtle Peter ranks the epiſtles of Paul among the *other ſcriptures*;* the ſacred writers

* 2 Pet. iii. 16.

ters always ſpeak with authority, as in the name of the Lord; and it will appear that their books have been regarded as the word of God, even from the primitive times. There ſeems no alternative, between admitting their claim to inſpiration in the fulleſt ſenſe, and utterly denying it. If ſome parts of the ſcriptures be inſpired, but others not: we want either *another revelation* to enable us to diſtinguiſh between the word of God, and the word of man intermixed with it; or elſe an infallible authority on earth, to which we may appeal: and ſo we muſt either have recourſe to the Pope, who has the title by preſcription; or to thoſe learned men, that give up the inſpiration of ſome parts of ſcripture in defending that of the reſt, and who ought to oblige us by exactly diſtinguiſhing between them.

If the whole ſcripture be inſpired, ſober criticiſm may generally diſcover the interpolations and variations, which have occurred in a lapſe of ages; and thus diſtinguiſh the word of God from human additions: and if a few paſſages ſtill remain doubtful, the cauſe of truth will not be affected. But if the line be not exactly drawn between the infallible word of God, and human opinions or dubious paſſages; every one who is put to difficulty in maintaining his ſentiment, by the authority of ſcripture, will evade the argument, by contending that the text in queſtion is not inſpired: and thus the ſtandard of truth and duty will be rendered vague and uncertain.

But to return from this digreſſion, Mr. P. ſays, that 'Revelation could not make fictions true.'

It

It might, however, preſerve men from writing fictions, and lead them to record all needful truth: and few have occaſion to be told, how partial and deluſive moſt hiſtories are, through the paſſions and miſapprehenſions of hiſtorians.

He obſerves in another place,* that 'not only *unchangeableneſs*, but even the *impoſſibility of any change* taking place, by any means or accident whatever, is an idea that muſt be affixed to what we call the word of God.' Now what is this but aſſerting without the leaſt proof, that God cannot give a revelation of himſelf to his creatures? Notwithſtanding the imperfections of language, the want of an univerſal language, the errors of tranſlators, copyiſts, and printers, &c; authors make a tolerable ſhift to communicate their ſentiments to mankind (ſome of them even to remote ages and nations) with little hazard of material miſtakes: and cannot the almighty and only wiſe God do the ſame?

Though Mr. P. aſſerts, that tranſlations of revelation can in no degree be depended on; and thence argues againſt the Bible:† yet he thinks tranſlations may very well anſwer the purpoſe, in reſpect of natural knowledge, which is *his revelation*. 'There is now nothing new to be learned from the dead languages: all the uſeful books are tranſlated, and the time expended in teaching and learning them is waſted.'‡ Tranſlations may not always be exact, and the knowledge of the original languages is very uſeful: yet good verſions will

* P. i. p. 19. † P. i. p. 26. ‡ P. i. p. 37.

will ſuffice to afford the unlearned reader a competent knowledge of all that is eſſential in any book: learned men will give warning to their neighbours, if a palpably falſe tranſlation be palmed upon them, of any work which intereſts mankind in general: and even the diſſentions among Chriſtians in this land, evince the fairneſs of our tranſlation of the ſcriptures; for all parties commonly refer to it. In like manner, the conteſts between Chriſtians and Jews, and the controverſies carried on with real or ſuppoſed hereticks, warrant our confidence, that theſe contending parties ſo watched over one another, as to prevent all material alterations in thoſe books, to which they agreed in making their appeal.

If any Chriſtians reject *reaſon* in receiving revelation, they act as abſurdly, as if a man ſhould put out his eyes, that he may ſimply avail himſelf of the light of the ſun; inſtead of putting out his candle, as of no further uſe. Reaſon ſhould be employed in weighing the evidences, and underſtanding the meaning of revelation: and faith is only a peculiar uſe of our rational faculties, under the influence of divine grace, in relation to the teſtimony of ſcripture; connected with a proper diſpoſition of heart, and producing a ſuitable tenour of conduct. But our vain, fallible *reaſonings*, and the concluſions deduced from them, muſt not be put in competition with the deciſion of God's unerring word.

Mr. P. ſeems to conſider falſe revelations, as a proof that there is no true revelation;* but do forged

* P. i. p. 41.

forged *aſſignats* prove that no genuine *aſſignats* have exiſted? Nay does not common ſenſe deduce the oppoſite inference? And could falſe revelations ever have obtained credit; if men had not generally deemed a revelation poſſible, deſirable, and even probable? We ſhould then carefully diſtinguiſh between the precious and the vile; and not reject all together.

Upon the whole, Mr. P's arguments againſt revelation are groundleſs aſſumptions, and confident aſſertions. They deny a power to God, which men evidently poſſeſs; and eſtabliſh principles, which would lead to univerſal ſcepticiſm.

Revelation may be conſidered as *immediate* to the perſon who receives it from the Lord; and *mediate* to all that receive it from him to whom it was firſt communicated. It relates to doctrines, precepts, or facts; and to things paſt, preſent (in time though inviſible to us) and future; as the day of judgment and an eternal world. A communication from God of things wholly unknown before, and undiſcoverable by other means, is an entirely new revelation: but immediate information of things, in ſome meaſure known before, or diſcoverable in other ways, is a partial revelation. When new truths are revealed, new ordinances inſtituted, and material changes in religion introduced; unequivocal miracles are neceſſary to authenticate them, and to ſeal the prophet's miſſion and prove his authority. But where the meſſenger, though immediately inſpired, was only employed to enforce thoſe truths and precepts, which had before been divinely atteſted,

miracles

miracles were not abſolutely neceſſary; though they might be very uſeful, in exciting the attention of the people: for the appeal might be made to a preceding authenticated revelation. No *apparent* miracles can prove the truth of any doctrine, which contradicts the eſſential principles of a former authenticated revelation; ſuch as Jehovah being the one living and true God, the heinouſneſs of idolatry, &c: but the excellent nature and tendency of a doctrine may be a corroborating evidence of its divine original. Theſe thoughts, however, make way for another ſubject, which requires a particular conſideration.

CHAPTER II.

MIRACLES.

MR. P. endeavours to confound *miracles* with *monſters*, *abſurdities*, *impoſſibilities*, or natural uncommon events. He aſſerts that 'no one thing is a greater miracle than another; an elephant not a greater miracle than a mite, a mountain than an atom!' I ſhould undervalue the reader's underſtanding, ſhould I take up any time in anſwering this. Who ever conceived any of theſe *creatures* to be miracles?* The aſcenſion of a balloon, elec-

 tricity,

* P. i. p. 56, 57.

tricity, magnetiſm, and the recovery of a drowned perſon, are ſaid 'to have every thing in them, which conſtitutes the idea of a miracle.' But certainly, nothing anſwers the proper idea of a miracle, which well informed perſons can account for on natural principles; though it may anſwer the purpoſe of impoſtors in deceiving mankind. Will any man affirm, that the miracles ſaid to have been wrought, when Moſes waved his rod can be thus accounted for? What *natural* efficacy could fill Egypt with frogs, flies, lice, or locuſts, exactly at the time when it was foretold they would come? or turn the waters into blood? or cauſe thick darkneſs for three days, in the whole land, while Goſhen enjoyed the light? or deſtroy in one night all the firſt-born of man and beaſt? or divide the ſea, for the deliverance of Iſrael, and the deſtruction of Pharaoh? Could an artful man impoſe on the ſenſes of two whole nations, in ſuch matters as a juggler can deceive a few people in a room? By what natural powers, which philoſophy may explain, could Chriſt give immediate ſight to a man born blind, cure inveterate paralytics in a moment, give *calmneſs* and rationality to diſtracted perſons, and ſoundneſs to withered limbs? How could he reſtore full health at once to ſuch as languiſhed in fevers or call the dead out of the graves? Could multitudes be perſuaded, that they ſaw theſe effects, when they ſaw them not? Could not they, who crucified Jeſus, have diſproved his pretenſions to miracles, if he had not wrought them? Would they and their poſterity to this day have imputed them to magic, or ſuch like cauſes, if they could

have

have denied them? Did not theſe miracles challenge inveſtigation from the beſt informed and moſt inimical? Were not time, place, and circumſtances particularly mentioned? and the appeal thus made to vaſt multitudes? What has magnetiſm, electricity, balloons, or magical deceptions, in common with ſuch miracles? In ſome caſes the *ſuſpended* principle of life may be reſtored by proper means; yet ſuch humane efforts often prove unſucceſsful; but when did Chriſt or his apoſtles fail of accompliſhing their purpoſe? If among 10,000 ſuppoſed to be dead, one ſhould be merely in the ſtate of a ſtrangled man, who could certainly know that one from all the reſt, as carried forth to be buried, or as laid in the grave? And ſhould any perſon now go forth, in the preſence of aſſembled multitudes, and ſay, "Young man ariſe," "Lazarus come forth;" would not his pretenſions be ſoon expoſed?

Either theſe miracles were not wrought as declared in ſcripture, or they were the effect of an omnipotent and ſupernatural energy; and prove the doctrine, in ſupport of which they were performed, to be from God: nor will a reflecting man be convinced, that any of the cauſes Mr. P. aſſigns, is adequate to produce ſuch extraordinary effects.

The *lameneſs* of 'the doctrine, which needs a miracle to prove it,'* means its contrariety to our falſe notions and corrupt affections: and it implies, that we ſhould not have diſcovered it without

* P. i. p. 58.

out revelation. The argument therefore ſtands thus: 'Every doctrine is *lame*, that we cannot know without revelation, or are not diſpoſed to receive: ſo that revelation is needleſs and uſeleſs; miracles are only needful to ſupport revelation; therefore all miracles are impoſture; and cannot authenticate revelation:' and thus our reaſoner argues in a circle!

Miracles confirming important truth and giving authority to divine injunctions, anſwer ſome other purpoſe, than 'to make people ſtare and wonder.' They do not ſtand on the teſtimony of a *ſingle* reporter, as if Mr. P. ſhould tell us he wrought a miracle in his ſtudy; but on the teſtimony of hundreds and thouſands of witneſſes. Who would have believed Lunardi, if he had told us, that he aſcended into the air in the deſerts of Arabia; when no ſuch event had ever here been witneſſed? But as he aſcended before 10,000 ſpectators, what reaſonable man can doubt it? Or who in future ages will diſpute the varacity of the authors who record it? The dilemma is therefore, not, whether it be more 'probable that nature ſhould go out of her courſe, or *a man tell a lie*:' but, whether it be more probable, that God, for wiſe reaſons, ſhould ſuſpend or alter the courſe of nature on ſome important occaſions; or that ten thouſands of witneſſes ſhould be deceived in the moſt evident facts, or combine together to deceive the world. And would not any one be ridiculed, who ſhould ſay, "It is more probable that a man ſhould lie, than that people ſhould mount into the air?" This I think is a fair ſtatement of the evidence concerning balloons.

Mr.

Mr. P. ſays, 'It would have approached nearer to the idea of a miracle, if Jonah had ſwallowed the whale; this may ſerve for all caſes of miracles.'* This may indeed ſerve for a ſpecimen of Mr. P's logic and candour; as his ſubſequent fancies concerning Jonah may of his *ſerioufneſs*. It certainly would anſwer his purpoſe, to have the ideas of *miraculous* and *impoſſible* confounded; and to define a miracle to be 'an *impoſſibility atteſted by a ſingle witneſs*. Againſt ſuch miracles his arguing would prove concluſive. He does indeed ſpeak of miracles as things *naturally incredible*:'† and in ſeveral places ſeems diſpoſed to retail Mr. Hume's famous ſophiſm, that 'miracles are contrary to univerſal experience;' which means, the experience of all who never ſaw them! The African prince, who called the Europeans *liars*, when they told him they had ſeen rivers and ſeas congealed by froſt as hard as a ſtone, was of the ſame *reaſonable* diſpoſition! This was contrary to the univerſal experience of all thoſe who inhabited the torrid zone; and it was more probable men ſhould lie, than that things naturally incredible ſhould be true!—But indeed miracles muſt be extraordinary events, to anſwer the end propoſed by them: and if they became ſo common, that every body had ſeen or obſerved them, we ſhould be ready to think them the effect of ſome unknown natural cauſes, inſtead of a divine interpoſition.

Mr. P. ſays, 'the moſt extraordinary of all the things called miracles, is that of the devil flying

 away

* P. i. p. 59. † P. ii. p. 4.

away with Jeſus Chriſt, &c.'* But the New Teſtament relates no tranſaction of this nature; we are there only told, that "the devil took Jeſus to the holy city," "and to the mountain;" and that "he brought him to Jeruſalem;" which does not imply that he was carried through the air, or went without his own free conſent. So that in this, as in other inſtances, Mr. P's profane ridicule falls on his own abſurd interpretation of ſcripture. Nor is this event mentioned as a *miracle* by the ſacred writers, in the ſtrict and proper meaning of that term.

Having now anſwered Mr. P's objections to miracles, which only prove that he did not underſtand the meaning of the word; let us take another view of the ſubject. Revelation has been ſhewn to be *poſſible*; and it will hereafter be proved *needful*. The God of goodneſs and mercy purpoſes, we ſuppoſe, to make known to mankind his perfections, truth, and will; and to ſhew them, in what manner he is pleaſed to be approached and worſhipped. He therefore communicates theſe things to an individual, and orders him to inform others concerning them. But the prophet may on ſuch an occaſion ſay, 'How ſhall it be known that the Lord hath ſent me?' 'The things to be declared are contrary to men's notions and practices; the world is full of impoſitions; how ſhall I be diſtinguiſhed from a deceiver?' Now does it not occur to every reaſonable man, that miracles, which would endure the ſtricteſt examination, wrought

* P. i. p. 59.

wrought in the preſence of multitudes, and frequently repeated or varied, would diſtinguiſh the true prophet from all pretenders to inſpiration, who either wrought no miracles, or ſuch only as were ambiguous and ſhrunk from inveſtigation? If it be not unſuitable to God to give a revelation to his creatures; it cannot be either improper or impoſſible for him to affix ſuch a ſeal to the inſtructions of his meſſengers, as can neither be denied nor counterfeited, without expoſing to ſhame the man who attempts it. To raiſe the dead is as eaſy to omnipotence, as to preſerve the living; to reſtore the withered arm, as to wither the healthy one; and to cure inſtantaneouſly the paralytick after 38 years, as to ſend a ſtroke of the palſy. The glory of God and the benefit of mankind are the ends propoſed; the means are obvious. All things may be alike *wonderful* to us; but all are not alike *miracles*: for miracles are effects produced, beyond the powers of man, and contrary to the ordinary courſe of nature: and when well authenticated, they are equally credible with other events; provided it appear alſo, that ſome important end was intended, and ſome great effects were produced by them. In this view, how different do the miracles of ſcripture appear, from the *inſulated*, *ambiguous*, *uncertain*, and *uſeleſs* miracles, pretended to have been wrought by Veſpaſian, or in favor of Alexander's army! though Mr. P. ſays theſe are quite as well authenticated as the Bible miracles!*

If

* P. ii. p. 5.

If the miracles aſcribed to Moſes, or to Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, were actually performed; it muſt be allowed, that they were the work of omnipotence, and can no otherwiſe be accounted for. It would alſo have been impoſſible to have forged ſuch ſtories of public miracles, ſo circumſtantially related, and to have given them currency among contemporaries. Whole nations, eſpecially of enemies, cannot thus be deprived of their ſenſes, or inhibited the uſe of them. It would have been equally impoſſible to have perſuaded the next generation, that their fathers had told them of theſe wonders from their infancy, and that they had ſeen and heard them: if they had never been told ſuch ſtories by their fathers. And at what time could the belief have been received either by Jews or Chriſtians, that theſe *miracles had always been credited among them*, had there been no truth in them? The attempt to convince whole nations, or large bodies of people, that from time immemorial ſuch things had been generally known and aſſuredly believed; that they had obſerved certain feſtivals and inſtitutions in commemoration of them, and were ſubject to laws and ordinances given at the ſame time; if the whole had been a forgery, would have been deemed an inſult on the common ſenſe of mankind.

The fables, which have obtained credit in different nations, had always ſome foundation in truth, however it were diſtorted. They never ſpecify the preciſe time, place, and manner, in which things happened; and they do not appeal to numerous living witneſſes and challenge inveſtigation.

tigation. The poets of Greece and Rome did not pretend, that they were eye-witneſſes of the ſtories, with which they embelliſhed their works. Homer and Heſiod vamped up fabulous traditions current among the Greeks: but they did not declare, that the whole nation, yea and rival nations alſo, ſaw thoſe things; and that they wrote their account *at the time* and *upon the ſpot*. This could never have obtained credit, even in thoſe days. Would it then be poſſible to invent a hiſtory of the remote times of this nation; and to perſuade mankind, that it had always been as commonly known among us, as the books of Moſes are among the Jews, or the New Teſtament among Chriſtians? And would it not have been equally impoſſible to have introduced theſe books, with *this kind of appeal*, at any future time, had they never before been publiſhed?

In order to illuſtrate the ſubject, let us conſider the ſingle miracle of our Lord's reſurrection.—His ignominious death and ſubſequent glory are evidently predicted in the Old Teſtament; and his enemies knew, that he had foretold his own reſurrection on the third day, and took their meaſures accordingly. On the third day the body was gone, and they could give no rational account of its removal. Twelve men, of good character and ſober underſtanding, ſuch as any court of juſtice would allow to be unexceptionable witneſſes, conſtantly affirmed that they ſaw Jeſus after his reſurrection, and examined his hands, feet, and ſide; that they had long known him, and were ſure it was he; that they had repeated opportunities of converſing

with

with him, and renewed aſſurances that they ſaw the identical body again alive, which had been nailed to the croſs; and at length that they ſaw him aſcend towards heaven. In this teſtimony, they perſiſted till death, without one of them deviating from it: in ſupport of their teſtimony, they renounced every intereſt, and faced all kinds of dangers and ſufferings imaginable; till moſt of them ſealed it with their blood. In all other reſpects, they were moſt virtuous and holy characters: and their doctrine is ſo ſtrict, that according to it a forgery of this kind, however well intended, will, unleſs repented of, enſure a man's eternal damnation. A great number of other witneſſes confirmed their teſtimony; the ſilence of their enemies, whoſe credit, authority, and even ſafety were deeply concerned, tends to eſtabliſh it. In authentic hiſtory we are told, that they wrought divers miracles, and communicated ſimilar powers to others, in ſupport of their evidence; and that thus God himſelf atteſted it. In the epiſtles, written by them to the churches, they ſpeak of theſe miraculous powers, as things well known among them, without fear of being diſproved. Their ſucceſs, in oppoſition to all the power, learning, genius, and religion in the world, merely by preaching a crucified and riſen Saviour, confirms theſe claims and the event they teſtified; and the exiſtence and effects of Chriſtianity for nearly 1800 years, combine with all the foregoing proofs, to authenticate the miracle of Chriſt's reſurrection.

If

If that event had not been true, how could ſuch multitudes, prejudiced in various ways againſt the goſpel, have been induced to embrace it? How came they, who continued enemies, to ſubmit ſilently to the charge of having murdered the Prince of life? Or how was Chriſtianity eſtabliſhed in the world? No fact was ever ſo fully confirmed as this, by multiplied and varied teſtimony, and by permanent, extenſive, and moſt important conſequences. Even the Jews have not denied the miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles, however perplexed to account for them: yet each miracle was equal at leaſt to an unexceptionable witneſs of the reſurrection, and conſequently to the truth of Chriſtianity. This may alſo anſwer Mr. P's objection to the teſtimony of the Jews. I ſuppoſe no man ever thought of bringing them forward as direct voluntary witneſſes to the truth of the goſpel; but they indiſputably confirm the antiquity of the Old Teſtament, and the reverence with which it hath been regarded by their nation at leaſt five hundred years before Chriſt: they eſtabliſh all the facts that relate to him, except his reſurrection; their preſent condition fulfils the predictions both of the Old and New Teſtament:* and to ſay that the Jews are the beſt evidence '*concerning* the truth of the goſpel,' is to affirm in other words, that none but enemies ſhould be admitted as witneſſes; and that when any of them are convinced and become Chriſtians, their teſtimony is thenceforth inadmiſſible.

CHAP.

* P. i. p. 9.

CHAPTER III.

PROPHECY.

MR. P. would perſuade us that prophets were merely *poets*, or *muſicians*, who made no pretenſions to inſpiration or prediction; and that Chriſtian theologiſts have advanced them to their preſent rank!* This he endeavours to prove, by obſerving that there is not a word in the Bible 'which ſignifies a *poet*.' Certainly there is in the New Teſtament;† but if there were not, what would this be to the purpoſe? There is no word in the Bible for a metaphyſician; *ergo* a prophet ſignifies a metaphyſician!—But he ſays that the prophets wrote in verſe! This they did frequently: but ſometimes they wrote in proſe. Occaſionally they played alſo on muſical inſtruments; but not always. What then? Did none except prophets write poetry, and uſe muſic and pſalmody? Did they *all* do theſe things? The New Teſtament prophets are not recorded to have uſed either muſic or poetry. Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob are called *prophets*;‡ though Mr. P. denies it; and ſays, 'it does not appear, they could either ſing, play muſic, or make poetry.' But whatever were the original

* P. i. p. 17—19. 60, 61. P. ii. p. 54, 55. † Acts, xvii. 98. ‡ Gen. xx. 17. Pſ. cv. 9—14.

ginal idea of a *prophet* or *propheſying*, who but Mr. P. would have repeatedly or confidently aſſerted the meaning now annexed to thoſe words to be a *modern* invention? What! did not the ancient Jews expect a Meſſiah according to the prophets? If they did, then, according to this ſagacious writer, they muſt have derived their ideas of *prophecy* from modern theologiſts, by *propheſying!* Yet he allows, that 'the profeſſion of a *ſeer*, the art of ſeeing, a viſionary inſight into things concealed, became incorporatd into the word prophet, at the time when Saul baniſhed the wizards!* Who can help noting with admiration this writer's conſiſtency!

The words *poet* and *prophet* are in pagan writers in ſome reſpects ſynonimous; becauſe the pagans aſcribed poetic raptures to inſpiration. Thus the poet was exalted into a prophet, not the prophet degraded into a verſifier and muſician; and I am confident, no ſober ſtudent of the Bible will find a ſingle paſſage, in which the idea of a divine ſupernatural impulſe is not connected with the words *prophet* or *propheſying*, except where falſe prophets are evidently intended.

The moral character of the *man* was not *eſſential* to the prophetical office. Balaam was a vile wretch; yet his predictions have been wonderfully accompliſhed: and many ſuch prophets will be detected at the day of judgment. The *evil ſpirit* from God did not come on Saul, when he joined the prophets; but "the Spirit of God came upon him and he propheſied:" and there is no intima-

* P. ii. 55.

tion that he performed his part ill.* But when the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, an evil ſpirit from the Lord troubled him.† And then indeed he acted *very ill:* for perhaps mimicking the agitations of the prophets, when under divine impulſes, he was inſtigated by Satan to attempt the murder of David. Theſe things however create no difficulty to commentators, though they may perplex Mr. P. and many of his readers.

A prophet, in ſcripture, does not always denote one that predicts future events; but it conſtantly means a man ſupernaturally inſtructed or directed by the Lord, except when falſe prophets, the counterfeits of the true, are intended. The argument concerning predictions, does not however depend on the meaning of a word: it muſt be decided by facts. Did not the ancient prophets foretell a variety of circumſtances, concerning the promiſed Meſſiah, which were exactly fulfilled in Jeſus of Nazareth? Did they not mark out the line whence he would ſpring; the place of his birth; the miracles he would perform; the uſage he would experience; the ſuffering he would endure; his conduct under them, with that of the Jews and ſoldiers; his death, burial, and reſurrection, and the ſubſequent prevalence of his cauſe? If this be undeniable, how abſurd is it to pretend, that moderns have falſly dignified Jewiſh poets and muſicians with the title of prophets?

were

* 1 Sam. x. 6—12. xix. 20—24. † 1 Sam. xvi. 14. 15. xviii. 10.

Were not the predictions of the Old Teſtament exactly deſcriptive of the events, which have ſince taken place, reſpecting Egypt, Tyre, Nineveh, Babylon, Jeruſalem, and the Jewiſh nation? Does not the New Teſtament contain predictions of Jeruſalem trodden under foot of the Gentiles; the Jews ſcattered through all nations; and the ſuperſtitions, idolatries, uſurpations, and perſecutions of that church, which hath forbidden to marry, and commanded to abſtain from meat, hath enjoined the worſhip of angels, and been drunken with the blood of Chriſtians? Were theſe predictions unmeaning words, or random conjectures?—Even the Romans, from a ſlight acquaintance with the Jewiſh ſcriptures, had concluded that ſome wonderful perſon was about to ariſe in the world, when Chriſt was born; as Virgil's eclogue, called Pollio, and the famed ſybelline books undeniably prove.

Was then ever any thing ſo puerile or diſingenuous, as to pretend that propheſying was merely ſinging and muſic? To ſpeak of the 'inventors of the goſpel *ſtretching* the prophecies of the Old Teſtament to the times of the New?' To aſcribe the ancient expectations of the Jews and other nations to modern inventions? To call the prophets 'poetical—muſical—conjuring—dreaming—ſtrolling gentry?'* To aſſert, that 'if the prophet happened in ſhooting with a long bow of a thouſand years, to ſtrike within a thouſand miles of a mark, the ingenuity of poſterity could make it point

* P. ii. p. 55.

point blank?" That every thing unintelligible was prophetical? and every thing inſignificant was typical: a blunder would have ſerved for a prophecy, and a diſh clout for a type?"* And in ſhort, that 'propheſying is lying profeſſionally?"†

I have not entered particularly on the ſubject of types; becauſe I would not reſt the argument of the divine inſpiration of ſcripture on that ground, but on things more obvious: otherwiſe, to a conſiderate mind a very wonderful confirmation of the truth may be derived from them, as well as an illuſtration of it. But I would here further obſerve, that there is not a ſingle inſtance throughout the ſcripture, in which any intimation is given, that "it repented the Lord," when a remote prophecy was ſpoken of: for this expreſſion always relates to threatening meſſages, when averted by reformation, or in anſwer to the prayers of the prophet. So that 'the Bible makes no fool of any man; but tells him plainly what to expect, in all poſſible caſes.

If revelation were impoſſible, or could not be communicated, prophecy would indeed be *uſeleſs*. But if it ever pleaſed God to reveal himſelf to mankind, as miracles were more ſuited to impreſs that generation, to whom the prophets were ſent, ſo predictions, evidently accompliſhing from age to age, while new predictions were ſtill given, muſt be the moſt concluſive proof to remote generations. And did the limits of this work admit of it, the predictions, interwoven with all the ſeparate diviſions

* P. i. p. 61. † P. ii. p. 82.

ſions of the ſcripture, might be ſhewn to demonſtrate them ſeverally, as well as collectively, to be the word of God. But I ſhall only add, that, if Mr. P. and his diſciples deſire to know further the uſe of prophecy, let this anſwer ſuffice: it enables us to ſhow, that the ſcoffs and reproaches of infidels were predicted by the ſacred writers; that the very abuſes of Chriſtianity, which they deem unanſwerable objections to its divine original, are in every inſtance a fulfilment of the ſcripture; that thus it was written, and thus it muſt be; and that in this reſpect prophecy enables us to cut off Goliath's head with his own ſword.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE VOTED FOR.

MR. P. ſays, 'They decided by vote, which of the books ſhould be the word of God, and which ſhould not.' Thoſe books, which had the majority of votes, were voted to be the word of God. Had they voted otherwiſe, all the people, ſince calling themſelves Chriſtians, had believed otherwiſe.'* If you aſk this confident aſſerter, *who* voted on this occaſion? He ſays, 'Who the people were that

* P. i. p. 13.

did all this, we know nothing of: they called themſelves—the church; and this is all we know of the matter.' But ſurely we ought to know much more of the *time*, *place*, and *manner*, in which ſuch an important tranſaction occurred, than this ambiguous ſtatement contains, before a man is authorized to infer any thing from it! And ſome proof ſeems requiſite to convince us, that all Chriſtians take their faith upon truſt, according to this repreſentation. Pious perſons indeed have, privately and collectively, beſtowed great pains, during a ſucceſſion of ages, to diſtinguiſh ſuch books, as have internal and external evidence of authenticity, and divine inſpiration, from impoſtures and writings of doubtful authority: and, before our time, this matter had been ſo thoroughly inveſtigated, that the moſt competent judges deem it not dangerous to coincide in opinion with thoſe that have gone before them; though not without enquiry, and ſome trivial difference of ſentiment. The Old Teſtament evidently ſtood a conſiderable time before Chriſt, nearly as we now have it. The Greek, Syriack, and Samaritan verſions prove this: our Lord and his diſciples quoted the books now received, and principally from the Septuagint. It is generally believed, on the authority of ancient Jewiſh writers, that Ezra, a learned ſcribe in the law, with ſome very able aſſociates, beſtowed much labour in diſtinguiſhing the authentic books of ſcripture from ſuch as were ſpurious, and thus formed the canon of the Old Teſtament. And the more

* P. i. p. 13.

more the ſubject is examined, the greater ſatisfaction will every candid perſon feel, in acquieſcing in their determination. For all the books we now have harmonize with each other, and with the New Teſtament, in the grand outlines of religion, yea even in more minute particulars, when well underſtood: but the apocryphal books often advance anti-ſcriptural doctrines, and relate moſt frivolous and romantic adventures. Every thing in the received ſcriptures coincides, in reſpect of dates, cuſtoms, the manners of the times, and hiſtorical tranſactions, with the moſt authentic records of antiquity: but anachroniſm, confuſion, and inconſiſtency abound in the Apocrypha.

The canon of the New Teſtament fluctuated for a long time: but the diverſity of opinion related only to a few books; and full *diſcuſſion* and *inveſtigation*, not mere *vote*, at length determined Chriſtians to receive them, as they now ſtand, while others were rejected as ſpurious, for the moſt ſubſtantial reaſons. This ſurely proves, that great caution was uſed to prevent all impoſition. No reaſonable man can doubt, but the Chriſtians, who lived in the primitive times, had many advantages in determining this point; and their opinion is therefore entitled to great deference: but learned men are capable of reviewing the ſubject, and judging of the grounds on which they decided.

It is certainly *known* that the greateſt part of the books now conſtituting the New Teſtament were quoted by the moſt ancient Chriſtian writers; and in a manner which ſhews they derived their inſtructions from them, and appealed to them as of

divine

divine authority, excluſively to all other books which had been publiſhed among them. A vaſt proportion of the New Teſtament might be recovered from writers, who lived within the two firſt centuries. They formed catalogues of the books, and wrote comments on them. Both the orthodox and the hereticks made their appeal to them. Lectures on ſeveral parts of them are ſtill extant. Nay oppoſers of Chriſtianity uniformly mention them, as the authentic books of Chriſtians; while they oppoſe their contents; and there is the fulleſt proof, that all the twenty-ſeven books now collected in the New Teſtament, were received, and read in the aſſemblies of Chriſtians, in the ſecond century, except the Epiſtle to the Hebrews; the Epiſtle of James; the ſecond Epiſtle of Peter; the ſecond and third of John; that of Jude, and the Revelation of John: and that moſt of theſe, if not all, were extant and well known, though not generally received as divinely inſpired.

What then did Mr. P. mean by roundly aſſerting, 'that there was no ſuch book as the New Teſtament, till more than three hundred years after Chriſt?' This appears at firſt ſight one of the moſt daring falſhoods that ever was ventured upon; but in fact it is no worſe than a *quibble*, though too evidently intended to deceive. Becauſe, if you prove ſeparately every book to have exiſted, and all but one to have been received as the word of God; ſtill the New Teſtament did not exiſt as a book and as it now ſtands. This is the only way, I confidently affirm, in which Mr. P. can exculpate himſelf from the charge of direct falſhood: and this is not

a very

a very creditable way of oppoſing other men, whom he reviles as liars and impoſtors.

Who doubts the authenticity of other ancient books, becauſe the original manuſcripts are not forth-coming? Who could diſtinguiſh them from other ancient manuſcripts if they were? He, who demands a kind of proof, which the nature of the caſe cannot admit of, is determined, that no poſſible evidence ſhall convince him?*

If theſe books had not from the firſt been received as *genuine*, they could never afterwards have obtained that character, much leſs have acquired the title of the Word of God: for that jealous and ſcrupulous inveſtigation, which Mr. P. degrades under the idea of *voting*, proves the impoſſibility of a forgery eſcaping detection, and being received as a divine revelation.

Had the books which bear the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, &c. been publiſhed after their death, when they had never before been heard of; would not the ſeveral perſons and churches, to which ſome of them were addreſſed; and Chriſtians in general, as ſuppoſed to have been acquainted with them during the lives of the apoſtles and evangeliſts, have declared them to be forgeries? The claim it is evident would have been abſurd, and the impoſture manifeſt. The doubts that aroſe concerning the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, which bears not the name of Paul; that of James, which perhaps was *then* tho't, as it has *ſince* been, irreconcileable with Paul's doctrine;

* P. ii. p. 89.

trine; the ſecond Epiſtle of Peter, which ſeems to have been written juſt before his death, and the ſecond and third of John, in which he only calls himſelf the elder, prove this. Some of theſe books, and perhaps the Revelation of John, might not be generally known among Chriſtians, during the life time of their authors, or they might not be publicly acknowledged by them: and therefore, after their death, the ſcrupulous caution of the church long heſitated about admitting them as genuine and divine; till *internal evidence* fully convinced the moſt accurate judges, that they were entitled to that regard.

At what time, and in what manner, then could it be poſſible to fabricate the apoſtolical epiſtles, and gain them credit as well known and received from the days of their writers? and how could hiſtories and epiſtles be forged, ſo exactly to tally together in the moſt minute circumſtances, without the leaſt appearance of deſign? If ever books had internal marks of being *genuine*, which no rational man, on diligent peruſal can doubt; the Acts of the Apoſtles, and St. Paul's epiſtles have thoſe marks: and I believe it would be impoſſible, for all the genius of all the knaves on earth combined together, to write an hiſtory, and a number of epiſtles, ſo manifeſtly open, frank, artleſs, and often immethodical; and yet to make the one ſo perfectly to confirm the other. If the prieſts and rulers of the church ſhould have attempted to impoſe on the people, would theſe have unanimouſly conſented to the fraud? And would Jews, Pagans, and Hereticks have allowed the forgeries of

Chriſtians

Chriſtians to have been genuine and ancient books? A very probable ſtory indeed is deviſed by our Oracle of Reaſon, when he ſuppoſes, that the very church, which held purgatory, diſpenſations, &c. fabricated the epiſtles, which predict and condemn thoſe abuſes! And very wiſe he muſt be to ſay, 'the church could write, and therefore could fabricate them!' Let Mr. P. or his friends try to fabricate ſome epiſtles, and aſcribe them to Luther, Calvin, Beza, Cranmer, or ſome of the reformers; and, even allowing them the *immenſe advantage* of ſaying, they were never before publiſhed, they will ſoon find it much eaſier to write, than to eſtabliſh a literary forgery!

The reſurrection of Chriſt has been proved; and the apoſtles ſhewn to have been faithful witneſſes. Two of the goſpels were written by them, and have been evidently extant from their days, as all competent judges muſt allow; and the other two goſpels were written by the companions of the apoſtles These were publiſhed when the facts were recent; and no enemy, for near four hundred years afterwards, attempted to *diſprove* them. The miracles wrought by the apoſtles and evangeliſts confirmed the truth of the narrative. In theſe books the words of Chriſt are contained; and they authenticate all the reſt of the ſcripture.* We have ſeen, that he always quoted

* Our Lord ſays, "Had ye believed Moſes, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not *his writings*, how ſhall ye believe my words." (John v. 46, 47.) Does not this decide that the books of Moſes are *genuine*, with all that believe the teſtimony of Chriſt?

quoted every part of the Old Teſtament as the word of God : and he gave *his apoſtles* the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that whatever they bound or looſed on earth, ſhould be bound or looſed in heaven. This could only be done by their *doctrine*; and all human cenſures and abſolutions are valid, ſo far as they agree with the doctrine of the apoſtles, and no further. But where ſhall we find this doctrine, but in their writings ? Theſe writings contain alſo internal proof both of being genuine and divine; and are confirmed to us by prophecies, which have been fulfilling ever ſince. Whatever men may now ſay of the ſacred writers, they always ſpeak of themſelves and each other, as declaring the truth of God to mankind, and they demand credit and obedience as the meſſengers and ambaſſadors of Chriſt. On every account, therefore, we have good reaſon, independently of ancient *opinion*, to receive the whole ſcripture as the infallible word of God.—' But Chriſt did not write his own life.'* What then ? If he had, would not its authenticity or genuineneſs have been as liable to be queſtioned, as Matthew's or John's life of him ? This again leads to univerſal ſcepticiſm, and is replete with moſt arrogant preſumption.

Upon the whole, there is not a religion in the world at this day, except Chriſtianity, that ſo much as pretends to be a divine revelation from God, demonſtrated by miracles and prophecies ; and rendered ſucceſsful by a divine power accompanying

* P. i. p. 8.

nying unarmed, unlettered men, preaching a holy doctrine, in the midſt of potent and violent enemies, and patiently enduring all ſufferings, even to death, in the cauſe. The Jews adhere to the Old Teſtament; but that evidently foretells and terminates in the New. Mahomet, reſpecting whom Mr. P. has ſpoken with great incorrectneſs, propagated even his licentious religion by the ſword, and with many advantages had very little ſucceſs, till he adopted that meaſure: and there are no other candidates, which even Mr. P. thought worthy to be mentioned. What hath therefore been diſcourſed, concerning revelation, miracles, prophecy, and the canon of ſcripture, contains ſuch a maſs of evidence in proof of Chriſtianity, as never was, or can pretend to be, equalled, by the advocates for any other religion in the world.

CHAPTER V.

MYSTERY.

MR. P. allows, 'in one ſenſe, that every thing is a myſtery to us:—that we, however, know as much as is neceſſary for us;—and that it is better the Creator ſhould perform all for us, than that we ſhould be let into the ſecret.' But, having made this conceſſion, he ſubſtitutes *moral truth*, in the place *of truths relating to God and eternity;* and con-

 founds

founds *myſtery* with *obſcurity*: and then proceeds to call 'myſtery the antagoniſt of truth,' 'a fog of human invention, that obſcures truth, and repreſents it in diſtortion.'* To believe there is a God may be *eaſy*, or *neceſſary*; though atheiſts would diſpute that point with the author; but to know the nature and perfections of God is another matter. The Pagan philoſopher, who averred, 'that the more he thought of the Deity, the leſs he ſeemed to know concerning him,' ſpake far more reaſonably than modern deiſts. The religion that has any connection with an infinite and incomprehenſible God, and a boundleſs eternity, muſt be in many reſpects myſterious: unleſs a finite mind can fully underſtand infinity. But Mr. P. repeatedly calls *ethicks religion*; he ſays, 'religious duties conſiſt in doing juſtice, loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our fellow-creatures happy.'† Now an atheiſt may do all this: and is not that a ſingular definition of religious duties, which admits atheiſts to have been very exemplary in them? No doubt ſuch a religion may be as free from myſtery, as any thing in the world can be.

But myſtery, in ſcripture, ſignifies ſomething relative to God, and his dealings with us, which could not have been diſcovered, if it had not been revealed; which can only be received by crediting revelation; which cannot be known any further than God has ſeen good to diſcover it; and which is ſo connected with things unrevealed and incomprehenſible, that it cannot be fully underſtood or explained.

* P. i. p. 54, 55. † P. i. p. 4.

explained. The believer therefore *underſtands* the myſtery, as far as it is revealed; provided his faith do fully credit the whole divine teſtimony: but a great deal reſpecting it ſtill continues undiſcovered. He knows it, not by reaſoning, but by believing; he is ſtill greatly in the dark, and muſt wait for fuller light, till the Lord ſee good to afford it. In this ſenſe religion muſt be myſterious; even Mr. P's *revelation*, that is the *external world*, is by his own confeſſion almoſt as myſterious as the Bible. But on that ſubject he does not confound *myſtery* with *contradiction and abſurdity*; tho' he does in reſpect of the written word of God.

The ſcriptures plainly aſcribe divine perfections and operations, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghoſt; and uſe the ſtrongeſt language of perſonality reſpecting each of them, even in plain commands and promiſes: and as there can be but one infinite and eternal God, we infer, that HE is revealed as ſubſiſting in three perſons: being three in one ſenſe, and one in another. But *how* theſe things are, we cannot comprehend: and we ſhould not attempt to explain them, further than the oracles of God have done. The *doctrine* is an article of faith; the *modus* is not. We do not ſay that one is three, or three one; which is a contradiction: but as a man conſiſts of a material body, an animal life, and a rational ſoul; and is thus threefold in ſome ſenſe, though ſtrictly one individual; ſo the Deity is one in eſſence; but in ſome myſterious manner is triune. This alluſion is not meant as an *illuſtration* of the ſubject, for it cannot be illuſtrated; but it ſhews, that there is no contradic-

tion

tion in ſaying that the ſame being may be three-fold in one ſenſe, and one in another.

A trinity of *gods* would certainly weaken the belief of one God; but a trinity of *perſons* in the Deity cannot have this effect. Rather it helps and directs the confidence of the believer in the father's mercy, through the mediation of the ſon, and by the ſanctification of the Holy Spirit.* The emblems of the Holy Spirit "as a dove," "a ruſhing wind," "and fire," do not relate to his *eſſence*, but to his operations on the minds of men, and Mr. P. is both ludicrous and blaſphemous on this ſubject.

The Deity of Chriſt is another view of this myſtery: and Mr. P's teſtimony to this doctrine, as certainly contained in ſcripture, is not unworthy attention; though his repreſentation of it be diſtorted and erroneous. Many other myſteries might be conſidered; but theſe alone need be mentioned in this place.

CHAP.

* P. ii. p. 101, 102.

CHAPTER VI.

REDEMPTION.

MR. P. as it might have been expected, has made ſeveral objections to the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Chriſt: a plain proof that no man can help ſeeing this doctrine in ſcripture, if he have not ſome previous bias on his mind reſpecting it.

Unleſs we underſtand the moral character of God, and the perfect holineſs required by his righteous law; and are convinced of our own ſinfulneſs and deſert of wrath and condemnation; unleſs we have an acquaintance with the ſtate of the world as "lying in wickedneſs," and the utter inſufficiency of all that we or any other men can do, to remedy theſe evils: it is impoſſible we can receive, in a proper manner, the ſcriptural doctrine of redemption. But when theſe things are clearly perceived, and a correſpondent diſpoſition of heart is produced; the whole appears to be the plan of infinite wiſdom, to diſplay the honor of the divine law, juſtice, and holineſs, in ſhewing mercy to the vileſt tranſgreſſors. The Lord, in this wonderful manner, moſt emphatically ſhews his hatred of ſin, and his judgment of its deſert; while he pardons and ſaves ſinners: and thus he makes way for producing in our hearts deep humiliation, dread and hatred of ſin, cheering hope of mercy, and

lively love and gratitude, in entire harmony. At the ſame time, all intelligent beings, in the univerſe, how many ſoever there are, or may hereafter be, will to eternal ages learn from this ſubject the whole character of God; and receive ſuch inſtructions concerning his harmonious perfections, as will prove a vaſt acceſſion to their felicity, and redound exceedingly to his glory.

With theſe ſublime thoughts before us, to what do Mr. P's objections amount? Would Satan's exhibiting himſelf on a croſs, in the ſhape of a ſerpent, as a puniſhment for tempting our firſt parents, have diſplayed the evil of *our* ſins, the juſtice of God, in condemning the wicked, and his mercy in ſaving believers? Would it have anſwered one ſingle end, for which the ſcriptures inform us the Son of God was manifeſted? And in what reſpect does Satan now triumph; when by the death of Chriſt his kingdom is ſubverted, his cauſe ruined, and his eternal ſhame and miſery increaſed? 'The profaneneſs and abſurdity of the ſtory,' as Mr. P. expreſſes it, muſt go upon the ſuppoſition, that ſin does not deſerve puniſhment, that man is not a ſinner, or that it is not proper that God ſhould regard the glory of his juſtice and holineſs in ſhewing mercy.* The ſhocking charge of *ſuicide* brought againſt Chriſt, upon the ſuppoſition that he died for our ſins, would at leaſt equally fall on every one, who determined to die, rather than deny the truth, betray a good cauſe, or deſert his friends and country. The bounty of providence

* P. i. p. 12, 13.

dence ought indeed to awaken our gratitude: but unleſs we be conſcious of our unworthineſs, we are not apt to be very thankful; and if we know ourſelves, we ſhall not be animated to cheerful gratitude, till confidence of forgiveneſs and ſalvation be inſpired.

Did we think ourſelves ſo *good*, as to be *worthy* that the Son of God ſhould come and die for us, we ſhould be juſtly chargeable with *gloomy pride*: but all true believers admire the love of God in this great tranſaction, *becauſe they know themſelves unworthy of the leaſt of his mercies*.

Mr. P. may think, that Chriſt might as well have died of a fever, the ſmall pox, or old age:* but the Lord ſaw otherwiſe; and we may perceive, that to ſuffer, though ſinleſs, and in the vigour of manhood, as a condemned perſon, numbered with malefactors, by an ignominious and torturing death, in the manner marked as accurſed in the Old Teſtament, was far more ſuited to the idea of an *atoning ſacrifice*, than any kind of natural death could have been. The pain and ſhame of ſuch a death, with the anguiſh of ſpirit expreſſed by Chriſt in the garden and on the croſs, far better illuſtrated the wrath of God he endured for us, and which we muſt otherwiſe have borne for ourſelves to eternity, than the common circumſtances of death could have done. Being perfectly holy, he was incapable of remorſe and ſtings of conſcience; with firm expectation of the joy ſet before him, he was not liable to deſpair; and his divine nature, giving infinite

* P. i. p. 21, 22.

finite value to his temporary ſufferings, rendered eternal duration needleſs. In all other reſpects, it behoved him as our ſurety to ſuffer all that *our* ſins deſerved, and not merely the puniſhment due to Adam's firſt tranſgreſſion. Yet the firſt Adam, the progenitor of men, not only forfeited natural life, but became dead in ſin, and expoſed to future perdition: and the ſecond Adam, the Lord from heaven, in whom all believers were repreſented, ranſomed them not from *dying*, but from *death*, ſpiritual and eternal; for when the body dies, the ſoul renewed by divine grace is received to glory, the body ſhall be raiſed incorruptible, and death ſhall be ſwallowed up in victory. Where then is the pun or quibble in the apoſtle's words?* What Chriſtian ſuppoſes that Chriſt came to ſave men from dying? No doubt the holy Saviour ſuffered all his days, by living in this ſinful, miſerable world: but did he not ſuffer alſo in dying; though his death made way for his reſurrection and ſubſequent glory?

If men have abuſed the doctrine of the croſs, and deduced a corrupt theory of human merits from it;† we ſhould learn to diſtinguiſh truth from falſhood, and not reject both together. It is abſurd to ſuppoſe one ſinner can merit for another: but not, that a holy and glorious perſon ſhould ſubmit to do and ſuffer many things for ſinners, whoſe nature he had aſſumed in order that it might be honorable to God for his ſake, and through his interceſſion to ſhew mercy to them. Did no prince ever

* P. i. p. 22. 1 Cor. xv. 45—50. † P. i. p. 23.

ever favor a ſubject, who was obnoxious to puniſhment, for the ſake of ſome near relation, who had performed great ſervices, and interpoſed in his behalf?

The idea of pecuniary redemption is a ſcriptural illuſtration of the atonement. No mere creature is maſter of his own life; no man can be found who has not forfeited it by his own ſins: otherwiſe, he might as juſtly ſuffer pain and death, as reduce himſelf to poverty, by anſwering for another perſon; provided he were perfectly free in undertaking ſuch an engagement, and the ends of juſtice could be anſwered by it. *Moral juſtice* is ambiguous: but *diſtributive juſtice* may and does take the innocent for the guilty, whenever the bondſman is arreſted for the debt of the principal: and though it does not extend to death, it can only be thence inferred, that this is deemed inexpedient in human ſociety. If an innocent man ſhould ſuffer the loſs of a ſhilling, or a day's liberty, for the fault of another, without *his own voluntary engagement*, it would be injuſtice or indiſcriminate revenge, as *really*, though not in the *ſame degree*, as if he were put to death: and it would be extremely difficult to our caſuiſt, in ſuch caſes, to draw the line; and, ſuppoſing a previous engagement, to ſhew exactly where juſtice ended, and diſcriminate revenge entered.

We ſuppoſe Chriſt to have been a divine perſon, God manifeſt in the fleſh; and that he voluntarily engaged to magnify the law, and ſatisfy divine juſtice, in the ſtead and for the ſake of his people; fully knowing the whole caſe. Having in our nature been perfectly obedient to the law, and not

forfeiting

forfeiting his life by one failure; he had in all reſpects that right to diſpoſe of it as he pleaſed, which no other man ever had or can have. The ends of the divine government were compleatly anſwered by his death upon the croſs: and he moſt freely laid down his life for us, having power to take it again; in order by his temporal ſufferings to ſave an innumerable multitude from eternal miſery, to the everlaſting glory of God. In the fulfilment of this plan, what injuſtice was done? Indeed the charge is wholly grounded on the falſe ſuppoſition, that Chriſt was ſubſtituted in our place, without his own free conſent.*

Mr. P's objections, after all, principally ariſe (as every other perſon's do) from this doctrine's 'repreſenting man as an out-law, an outcaſt, a beggar, a mumper, &c:' he ſhould have ſaid at once an hell deſerving ſinner. No man will ever cordially acquieſce in the doctrine, with a proper view of it, till he come in that character for ſalvation. Then his life will neither be ſpent in grief, nor the affectation of it: but he will rejoice in Chriſt Jeſus and both reliſh the comforts, and be ſupported under the trials of life, far better than any other perſon. That doctrine, which to unbelievers appears ſo *gloomy*, will brighten every proſpect, and fill his heart with joy and hope, and his tongue with thankful praiſes. The opaque cloud, which Mr. P. ſays the 'perſon of Chriſt, places between the underſtanding and the deity, and introduces *maniſm* and *atheiſm*;'† appears to the believer a glorious diſplay of

* P. i. p. 24, 25. † P. 1. p. 31.

of the divine perfections, in a manner, and through a *medium*, ſuited to his feeble conceptions, and relieving to his guilty conſcience: ſo that "beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord" (in the face or perſon of Chriſt) "he is changed into the ſame image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."*

Others of us, as well as Mr. P. have had ſuch childiſh thoughts of redemption as he relates:† but "when we became men, we put away childiſh things;" he retains and retails them as highly reaſonable! But what is there in the doctrine of redemption, as above ſtated, that anſwers to the words paſſion, impotent revenge, murder, &c? And what do men mean, by miſrepreſenting ſcripture doctrines, in order to blaſpheme them?

Or will Mr. P. aſſert, that he knew no better, when he ſaid, 'The Chriſtian mythology has five deities; there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt; the God Providence, and the Goddeſs nature! Surely he knew, that Chriſtians conſider the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, as one God: and providence as the ſuperintending care of God over all his creatures. As for Nature, ſhe is the Deiſt's goddeſs: the Bible ſays nothing about her *agency*, nor do any of thoſe who "ſpeak according to the oracles of God." Are theſe wilful calumnies proper weapons with which to oppoſe even impoſtures? What ſhall we think of a man, who ſays, 'the Chriſtian ſtory of God the Father putting his Son to death, or *employing* people

* 1 Cor. iii. 17, 18, iv. 1—6. † P. i. p. 44.

ple to do it (for that is the plain language of the ſtory) cannot be told to a child—as if mankind could be improved by the example of *murder ?*' The Jews and Romans murdered Chriſt; but what Chriſtian ever ſuppoſed that God employed them to do it? or propoſed their example to imitation? The reſt is too horridly blaſphemous to be anſwered; and ſhould not have been produced, except as it illuſtrates the manner and degree, in which infidels miſrepreſent our doctrines, and calumniate our characters, in order to find argument, or invective againſt us.

Mr. P. is little acquainted with ſerious Chriſtians —but, I believe, I may anſwer for moſt of them, that they beſtow pains, as ſoon as their children become capable of inſtruction, in teaching them the doctrine of redemption, by the death of Chriſt, as revealed in the holy ſcriptures: and if men called Chriſtians teach their children only *morals*, and not the *principles of the goſpel*, they grievouſly miſunderſtand the Bible, and neglect their duty.

I have no objection to Mr. P's aſtronomy, or his opinion concerning a plurality of worlds, conſidered abſtractedly. If theſe worlds be inhabited by rational creatures, which however probable is merely conjectural, either the inhabitants are ſinners, or they are not.—If they be not ſinners, they do not want a Saviour: but provided the way of man's ſalvation be made known to them, it may vaſtly enlarge their views of the Creator's harmonious perfections, and increaſe their admiring love and pure felicity. And it ſignifies not how mean or ſmall the ſtage was, on which this glorious ſcene

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was exhibited; if the whole obedient creation of God derive advantage from it, and render him eternal praiſes and adoration. If the ſuppoſed inhabitants of any of theſe worlds be ſinners, we are ſure that the Lord will not do them injuſtice: we do not ſay, that it is impoſſible for *him* to deviſe ſome other way of reconciling infinite juſtice with the exerciſe of mercy; though *we* cannot conceive how it can be done: and we do not know, but they may be left without mercy to condign puniſhment. All reaſoning on ſuch grounds is "intruding into things not ſeen" by men, who are "vainly puffed up with a fleſhly mind."* But for a philoſopher, in this Age of Reaſon, 'to ſuppoſe that the infinite God muſt leave the care of all worlds, when he came to ſave one,' is ſo groſs an idea, that one cannot but ſtand amazed at it! We pretend not to comprehend the Deity; we allow that "without controverſy, great is the myſtery of godlineſs, God manifeſt in the fleſh:" but the attributes of omnipreſence and omnipotence muſt be inſeparable from the Godhead: theſe abſolutely exclude ſuch notions as Mr. P. hath ſtarted; and I am perſuaded they ſcarcely ever enter the mind of the moſt unlettered Chriſtian; or if they do, they are rejected as groſs abſurdity, or diabolical ſuggeſtions.† Many other miſrepreſentations are given of this ſubject; but they are too contemptible to require an anſwer.

* Col. ii. 18. † P. i. p. 63.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF DEISM.

MR. P. enlarges on this ſubject in both parts of his work, and evidently conſiders it as his principal argument againſt the ſcriptures. 'The creation is the only word of God, and natural philoſophy the only preaching.' This idea is frequently held out, in a variety of expreſſions, in different places. Now it is certain, that numbers do not ſo much as believe there is a God, or that he created and governs the world: ſo that this *revelation* and *preaching* are not univerſally intelligible and convincing. But were it otherwiſe; is all elſe 'redundancy that ſhould be got rid of?' This is indeed a very extraordinary *recipe* for an univerſal religion; which in fact would be no religion at all, but merely be an aſſent to a ſingle undefined propoſition; either producing no effects, or ſuch as would vary according to men's ideas of God. The devotees of Jupiter, Venus, Mars, Bacchus, Moloch, or Epicurus's indolent deity, would not be very much agreed as to the nature of religion: ſo that upon this plan, natural philoſophers, having thruſt out the miniſters of the goſpel, muſt ſucceed to their office, and give the people ſome ideas concerning the Deity.

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But, though "the inviſible things of God, are clearly ſeen from the creation of the world, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; ſo that atheiſts and idolaters are without excuſe:" yet it is evident that men have almoſt as much neglected, miſinterpreted, or differed about this *revelation*, as that contained in the holy ſcriptures. Only a very ſmall proportion of the human race have gathered ſo much as Mr. P's deiſm from it: and the deiſts, who profeſs to believe in one God of infinite perfection, almoſt univerſally ſpring up in places where the Bible is known. They *borrow* or *ſteal*, or *imperceptibly to themſelves acquire at ſecond hand*, their glimmering light, from the very book, againſt which they oppoſe it; and in different circumſtances, they might have been atheiſts or idolaters: for this has been the caſe of almoſt the whole human ſpecies in every age, though probably none have been wholly deſtitute of all remains of original revelation.

It is unreaſonable, to take a very few individuals, who have free acceſs to the ſcriptures, but reject a great part of them, as a ſpecimen of the religion men may learn from the creation by the exerciſe of their underſtandings. To judge fairly on this ſubject, we ſhould take our ſpecimen from the inhabitants of new South Wales, or the newly diſcovered iſlands in the South ſea, and Pacifick ocean, where the Bible has never been known: and the hiſtory of mankind from the beginning muſt be adverted to, before we bring in our verdict. For even the pagan moraliſts borrowed from

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the ſcriptures: and after the æra of Chriſtianity, their ſentiments on many ſubjects ſavour, as it were, of the New Teſtament.

But leaving this important conſideration; how are matters at preſent, even in Europe, among thoſe who reject the Bible? Have they all recourſe to *practical* deiſm? Is it not evident, that they underſtand Mr. P's *revelation* almoſt as little, as they do that which they have renounced? This alſo wants tranſlating, and expounding, or men will miſunderſtand it. Let the aſtronomer then become a preacher, and try how far ſcience will go in making pure deiſts. He will ſoon find, that the huſbandman, the artiſt, and mechanic, with all the buſy and labouring part of mankind, will never ſpare time, money, or attention, to gain the neceſſary acquaintance with his principles and demonſtrations, to enable him to begin his practical deductions: and at laſt, how feeble, and indecifive will they prove? The bulk of mankind can never be inſtructed in this way: and even the few, who are not engroſſed by buſineſs, or ſunk in low ſenſuality, will find the proceſs very tedious and inefficient.

But ſuppoſing moral truths, duties, and obligations could, by theſe or ſome other means be clearly defined and eſtabliſhed: the rules would want authority to enforce them; and men would remain deſtitute of ſufficient motives to urge them forward in a courſe, that would require immenſe exertion and ſelf-denial. What could the creation teach us decidedly concerning the moral perfections and government of God, or the *actual* immortality

tality of the ſoul? This at laſt can only be known, by a diſcovery of the creator's determination reſpecting it: and even Mr. P. ſeems to think, uncertainty or doubtfulneſs is all that can be attained or would be uſeful, in that matter.* Yet he himſelf in another place calls *doubtfulneſs the oppoſite of belief*;† in which he both contradicts the *truth* and *himſelf*: for *doubtfulneſs* is the middle point between *believing* and *diſbelieving*.—According to this doctrine, however, the probability, or poſſibility of a future ſtate is all we ought to know: without any acquaintance with the nature of it as happy or miſerable, or the influence of our preſent conduct on our future condition. That is, we are in the dark, and it is beſt to be ſo: or in the words of ſcripture, "men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil." This is deiſm, all-ſufficient deiſm!

What then can the creation teach a man, concerning the way of finding relief from bitter remorſe of conſcience? of obtaining the pardon of numerous and heinous crimes! of finding peace with God, and the enjoyment of his favor? of gaining the victory over domineering luſts and habits, or ſtrong temptations, or of eſcaping the pollutions and ſnares of the world? What can we thence learn, which will inſpire a ſinner's heart with calm reflecting conſolation in deep ſcenes of diſtreſs; or enable him to meet death with exulting hope of future felicity?—A poor wretch, having fallen into a pit and broken his bones, lies lan-

* P. ii. p. 100, 101. † P. ii. p. 69.

guiſhing in agony, and at the point of death, for want of aſſiſtance; and a paſſenger inſtead of helping him out, gravely teaches him how men ought to walk, and look to their ſteps when they travel on the road; and concludes by ſaying, 'This is ſufficient, and all elſe is unneceſſary!'

Man is evidently in a ſtate of ſuffering and death: if he reflect at all, he forebodes a future ſtate of retribution, and conſcious of guilt he dreads the conſequences; and if he do not reflect, the caſe is ſtill more deplorable. If he be thus ſtupid, he wants to be warned, and made ſenſible of his true character and ſituation: if he be alarmed, he enquires what he muſt do to be ſaved? how he may eſcape condemnation, and obtain eternal life? Is it enough to ſay to ſuch a man, All nature teaches us the being of a God, moral principles are rational and obvious: ſtudy the creation, practiſe morality; *poſſibly* there is a future ſtate, *poſſibly* you may be happy in it: this is all you ought to know? Now does this fully meet the man's reaſonable and anxious enquiries, or at all ſuit his caſe?

But the word of God, authenticated by miracles, prophecy, and many infallible proofs, anſwers in the moſt explicit manner all the queſtions we can propoſe, on ſubjects ſo intereſting to us; it gives full and expreſs directions, encouragements, and aſſurances; and points out an adequate remedy, and effectual refuge to the vileſt of ſinners. Thus "life and immortality are brought to light by the goſpel." Let common ſenſe now determine whether theſe diſcoveries are unneceſſary and uſeleſs. Is a pardon uſeleſs to a condemned criminal? A

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phyſician and a healing medicine to the ſick? relief to the indigent, liberty to the captive, or ſight to the blind? "Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for their's is the kingdom of God." When the ſoul is truly humbled for ſin, the goſpel is more ſuited to its caſe, than any illuſtration can adequately repreſent: but the ſelf-ſufficient and ſelf-wiſe always did, and always will, ſecretly or openly, pour contempt upon it. This the ſcripture hath predicted; and the conduct and ſpirit of thoſe who oppoſe Chriſtianity abundantly verify thoſe predictions. —The Bible propoſes an adequate remedy to the wants of ſinners; and the ſtate of the world ſhews it to be extremely wanted. But Deiſm can pretend to nothing of the kind, and it is therefore indeterminate, inefficacious, and obſcure; unſuitable to man's condition and character: and though abſtractedly it may be ſaid to be good as far as it goes; yet it is wholly inſufficient for all religious purpoſes, in the preſent lapſed ſtate of human nature.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NATURE AND TENDENCY OF CHRISTIANITY.

MR. P. has, *diſingenuouſly* and *ſtudiouſly* as far as man can judge, confounded Chriſtianity with all the abuſes and perverſions of it; and with all the crimes that *maſked* atheiſts have taken occaſion from it to perpetrate. It would much exceed my limits, to notice all that he has advanced on this ſubject; and by far the greateſt part of it has nothing to do with that cauſe I have undertaken to vindicate. Let him have full licence to abuſe domineering churchmen and perſecuting prieſts; let him exhauſt his rhetorick in declaiming againſt purgatory, penances, and diſpenſations; or that kind of Chriſtianity which is inimical to ſolid learning and ſober enquiry. But let not the pure religion of ſcripture be blamed for thoſe things, which are there both expreſsly predicted, and moſt ſeverely condemned. I would not even go out of the way, to diſpute for eſtabliſhments, or national religions; though, when connected with an equal toleration, they do not at all cramp free enquiry; and, when properly managed, they ſecure to the bulk of mankind a meaſure of religious inſtruction, which would not otherwiſe be afforded them.

The religion of the ſcriptures muſt be diſtinguiſhed, not only from all corruption, but from all appendages;

appendages; and all modes of promoting it, whether deemed expedient or not, if they be not expreſsly commanded. This religion makes known to us the one living and true God; not only in his external power and Deity, but alſo in the myſteries of his nature, and the perfections of his character, as far as we are concerned to know them. Infinite wiſdom, juſtice, purity, faithfulneſs, goodneſs, and mercy, harmoniouſly diſplayed, are thus viewed in connection with omnipotence, omniſcience, unchangeableneſs, omnipreſence, ſelf-exiſtence, and incomprehenſible greatneſs and majeſty. The Lord being thus altogether glorious and lovely, the creator of our bodies and ſouls, our continual and bounteous benefactor, and our moral governor and judge, commands us to love him with all our hearts, and to love our neighbour as ourſelves; and theſe comprehenſive precepts reach to all our thoughts, words, and actions, and every poſſible duty to God and man.

This law, univerſally kept, would produce univerſal order, peace, and felicity; for it is in all reſpects "holy, juſt, and good." By this rule all our conduct muſt be tried; and all the other precepts of ſcripture are elucidations of it, and applications of its general requirements to our ſeveral caſes and circumſtances. The Bible reveals alſo an eternal ſtate of righteous retributions: and as we have all broken the holy law of our God, we are no more able of ourſelves to eſcape future condemnation, than we now are to elude the ſentence of death; for, like other laws, it requires perfect obedience, and condemns every tranſgreſſor.

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Some information the ſcriptures afford us, concerning the manner, in which our race was thus involved in ſin and miſery: but far more concerning the method of our recovery. The deſcription, there given of our nature and character, does not indeed accord to the ſoothing ſpeculations of many philoſophers: but univerſal hiſtory, obſervation, and experience, prove that they anſwer exactly to it; and the more any one ſtudies his own heart, and compares his actions with the perfect law of God, the deeper will his conviction be, that the ſtatement of ſcripture is juſt, and his own ſelf-flattering concluſions erroneous. The view given of the evil and demerit of ſin is very offenſive to our pride, and alarming to our conſciences: yet deep reflection on the ſubject will tend to convince us, that we cannot eſtimate what degree or continuance of puniſhment, crimes committed againſt God do actually deſerve.

Theſe things premiſed, we obſerve that the ſcriptures eſpecially reveal the plan of ſalvation for ſinners, which infinite wiſdom and love have formed and completed. This plan centers in the perſon of Chriſt, Emmanuel, God manifeſted in the fleſh; in his righteouſneſs, atonement, mediation and grace; in his offices of Prophet, High-Prieſt, and King; in his power to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come to God by him; and in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and our renewal unto the divine image by his gracious operations.

All things having been thus made ready, in the obedience, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion of Chriſt, and his appearance in the preſence of God

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for us: Chriſtianity conſiſts in humble repentance of ſin; a believing reliance on the merits and atonement of the Son of God, and on the mercy of the Father through him; a cordial acceptance of Chriſt in all his characters and offices; and dependence, connected with experience, on the Holy Spirit, for that divine illumination, progreſſive ſanctification, and pure conſolation, which he beſtows on all who partake of his regenerating grace. Thus the ſinner, being converted and reconciled to God, juſtified by faith, and ſealed by the Spirit of adoption; expects the performance of the promiſes, in the uſe of appointed means; and animated by the motives and encouragements of the goſpel, he is inwardly and effectually taught by the "grace of God to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world." Thenceforth "he walks in newneſs of life." Love to God in Chriſt Jeſus, and to men for his ſake, becomes the temper of his heart, and the buſineſs and delight of his life. He is indeed ſtill imperfect, and in a ſtate of conflict: but as far as he acts according to his rule and obligations, he does no harm to any man; but all good to every one as far as he can with propriety. Humility, meekneſs, gentleneſs, forgiveneſs, benevolence, courteouſneſs, compaſſion, ſelf-denying, active beneficence, ſincerity, equity, fidelity, ſobriety, temperance, and purity, as well as piety, are the genuine effects of his principles. Were all men true and conſiſtent Chriſtians, wars would be impoſſible; fraud, oppreſſion, ſlander, licentiouſneſs, contentions, and all the crimes that diſturb ſociety,

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would ceaſe: the ſtormy ocean of the world would be huſhed into a calm: men would ſooner lay down their lives for their enemies, than perſecute: they would rather endure wrong, than commit it; or even conteſt their right, unleſs required by other duties.

This aſſuredly is the religion of the ſcriptures. Theſe have been, and ſtill are, its effects on thouſands: and could thoſe believers, who are now ſcattered abroad in the world, be collected together in one ſociety, and ſeparated from all other men; ſuch a ſcene of piety, purity, harmony and felicity would be witneſſed as has never yet appeared on earth, except in the Chriſtian church for a ſhort time after the day of Pentecoſt. Though even theſe perſons would in many reſpects come ſhort of their duty, and the genuine tendency of their principles.

Every thing, contrary to this ſtatement, militates againſt the very end of Chriſtianity. No countenance is there given to perſecutions, religious wars or maſſacres, to pious frauds, or imprecations: yea all ſuch things are condemned more ſeverely by the Bible than by any other book in the world. The judgments of God on his impenitent enemies, executed by men *expreſsly commiſſioned*, have nothing to do with our general conduct; but to inſpire us with abhorrence of ſin, which thus provokes a God of infinite goodneſs and mercy. The whole ſcripture teaches us meekneſs, and love of perſecutors; love expreſſed, even by ſuffering or dying for them, if that could ſave them from deſtruction.—*Excommunication* denotes

no

no more, than ſecluſion from religious ordinances and ſocieties, to preſerve them pure, and to make the cenſured perſon aſhamed, that he may be brought to repentance: for we are required not to count "him as an enemy, but admoniſh him as a brother:" and if any *penal* conſequences followed in the primitive times, they were *miraculous*, and conſequently cannot be imitated by us.

The whole ſyſtem of Chriſtianity tends to expand the heart, into the moſt enlarged and diſintereſted benevolence that can be conceived: and its effects have been prodigious, notwithſtanding abuſes, and declenſion from the primitive purity, zeal and ſimplicity. The gladiatorial ſhews, in which thouſands of lives were ſacrificed, to amuſe Roman *ladies*, as well as more vulgar citizens, were never aboliſhed till Chriſtianity prevailed againſt them. Hoſpitals, either wholly, or in great meaſure, owe their origin to the ſame powerful cauſe. The humanity exerciſed even in war for ſome centuries paſt, compared with the ſavage cruelty of ancient times, is the effect of Chriſtian principles. That change of ſentiments alſo, which has taken place in reſpect to the glory or diſgrace due to conquerors; and the very extenſive proteſt made againſt the abominable ſlave trade, and the iniquity of ſlavery itſelf, when not the puniſhment of atrocious crimes, is wholly the reſult of ſcriptural principles.

All therefore which Mr. P. has alledged on this ſubject, owes its plauſibility to his uniform method of blaming Chriſtianity for thoſe very abuſes, which it moſt ſeverely reprobates; and of con-

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founding the primitive church with the corrupted churches of ſubſequent ages; or the goſpel with popery, which are in moſt reſpects as oppoſite as light and darkneſs. Yet even corrupted Chriſtianity may be *ſlandered;* and it does not appear that it is juſtly chargeable with that declenſion in ſcience, which took place after the times of Chriſt, and iſſued in barbarous ignorance. Learning was very much declined, before Chriſtianity had produced any great effects on the maſs of mankind, and before it had at all influenced the Roman and Grecian ſcholars: and if afterwards ſuperſtition was inimical to ſcience; churchmen almoſt alone preſerved ſome remains of it, and were the chief inſtruments of at length effecting a revival. Vigilius and Galileo indeed were endangered by popiſh ſuperſtition and bigotry for their diſcoveries in philoſophy: but *they* were profeſſed Chriſtians, and one of them a churchman.

It is certain, that the Bible does not diſcountenance natural knowledge, if preſerved in due ſubordination to revealed truth. "The works of God are great, ſought out of all them that have pleaſure therein."* It throws no impediment in the way, to prevent improvement in any kind of uſeful knowledge: though it diſcourages preſumptuous ſpeculations, and expoſes the folly of ſelf-wiſdom, inſatiable curioſity, and vain reaſonings about matters too deep for us. For "to man it is ſaid, behold, the fear of the Lord that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil, that is underſtanding."†

True

* Pſ. cxi. 3. † Job xxviii. 28.

True Chriſtianity was never propagated by the ſword. When Peter in his impetuoſity ſmote Malchus, our Lord reproved him, and healed the wound he had given: and on a former occaſion, when the diſciples wanted to call fire from heaven on the Samaritans; he rebuked them and ſaid, "Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to deſtroy men's lives but to ſave them." I am not concerned to vindicate all that Chriſtians have done, but merely what Chriſt hath enjoined; and whoever at any time hath uſed violent meaſures in promoting the goſpel, let him ſtand condemned, as acting in diametrical oppoſition to his inſtructions. It is a certain fact, that the primitive Chriſtians prevailed, without uſing any ſuch methods: but if they had propagated Chriſtianity, as Mahomet did his impoſture, by war and rapine; I would have maintained this diſtinction; that he acted according to the principles laid down in the Koran; but they in expreſs oppoſition to the precepts and principles of the goſpel. *His* religion therefore was *juſtly* chargeable with the conduct, which it ſanctioned and required: Chriſtianity would not have been anſwerable for the baſe conduct of thoſe who acted againſt its plain commands; but *they* alone ought to have borne the blame.

Mr. P. calls the precepts of the ſcripture *fragments of morality*.* But in what other book ſhall we find ſo complete and perfect a ſyſtem of man's duty in all reſpects, enforced with ſuch authority, and

* P. ii. p. 98.

and ſuch powerful ſanctions? He ſays 'theſe fragments are irregularly and thinly ſcattered through theſe books, and make no part of revealed religion!' But was not the law delivered in the moſt ſolemn manner from Mount Sinai? and does it not virtually contain our whole duty to God and Man? Is it not the *rule*, the tranſgreſſion of which is called *ſin?* and is not *ſin* ſpoken of as deſerving puniſhment, requiring repentance, and needing forgiveneſs? Does not the ſcripture ſpeak every where of Chriſt, as coming to magnify the *law*, and make atonement for *ſin?* It is not promiſed, that this *law* ſhall be written in the heart of all the Lord's true people? Is not this law enforced in its various requirements, as branched out into many particular precepts, on all Chriſtians, with the moſt earneſt admonitions and exhortations? Are not the fruits of the Spirit coincident with the demands of the law? And is it not ſaid, that, "if any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his?" In ſhort, love to God and man is the ſubſtance of all religion: and the whole plan of redemption, the whole ſyſtem of the goſpel, was intended to put honor on this law; and after a manner worthy of the divine perfections and government, to reinſtate tranſgreſſors in the favor of God, and recover them to obedience, in part here, and perfectly in heaven hereafter.

Mr. P. ſays, 'the New Teſtament teaches nothing new on this ſubject!' We allow that its dictates are alſo inculcated in the Old Teſtament; though not with equal clearneſs and energy; but where elſe ſhall we find them? Love of the excel-

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lency, and zeal for the honor of God, with delight in him and gratitude to him, are not taught by pagan moraliſts, with any tolerable degree of preciſion and authority. Neither Greeks nor Romans have a word in their languages, properly expreſſing the ſcriptural idea of *humility*. The moſt eminent gentile writers ſubſtitute friendſhip and love of our country, which are frequently no more than a modification of ſelf-love, in the place of diſintereſted and enlarged philanthropy. Even Cicero never decidedly proteſted againſt the murderous gladiatorial games, nor the expoſing of infants; againſt ſuicide, or revenge; nor even againſt unnatural crimes, though ſanctioned by elegant and admired poets? Even Cicero never inculcated the liberal expenditure of money, in relieving poor, deſtitute plebians, or alleviating the miſeries of ſlaves and captives out of pure compaſſion, without regard to perſonal credit or advantage. Refined ſelf-love is the ſource, the centre, the object, and in moſt caſes the rule, even of his morality; though he wrote far better on the ſubject, than moſt of his predeceſſors. And if ſubſequent moraliſts have done rather better, we know whence they took their materials. For the inſinuation, that Chriſt learned his morality from the gentiles, is too abſurd to merit an anſwer.

We allow, that Jewiſh *magiſtrates* were directed to retaliate on certain injurious perſons; but the command of "loving their neighbours as themſelves," debarred the Jews from private revenge, as much as the expreſs commands of the New Teſtament do us. Moſt expoſitors would ſhew Mr. P.

the meaning of the precept, to which he objects, "If any man ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo." That is, bear injuries and inſults patiently, though that expoſe thee to more affronts; and enter not into contention, if it can be avoided without neglecting other duties. Proverbial expreſſions are not to be interpreted like mathematical theorems; and men are ready enough to make exceptions to ſuch general rules. Mr. P. approves of Solomon's maxim,* in hopes to give the gentiles the credit of it: but does not know, that St. Paul hath quoted it, as the ſubſtance of the duty of loving enemies?† No man I ſuppoſe, before Mr. P. ever thought we were commanded to love enemies better than friends, and to reward their injuries: but good will, and acts of kindneſs when needed, are due to our moſt cruel perſecutors and the vileſt criminals; and we ought to pray for their converſion and ſalvation. This, however, does not interfere with our ſpecial love to the righteous, gratitude to benefactors, and tender affection to relatives: for the Lord ſends common benefits on the unthankful and evil; but reſerves his ſpecial bleſſings for his obedient children. And if hypocrites have preached love to enemies, and been perſecutors, what has that to do with Chriſtianity, as contained in the ſcripture?

But I have ſomething further to ſay to Mr. P. on this ſubject, in reply to his *liberal* charges againſt Chriſtianity, as a perſecuting religion. In a paroxiſm of zeal and indignation, he exclaims, 'It is better

* Prov. xxv. 21. † Rom. xii. 19—21.

better, far better, that we admitted, if it were poſſible, a thouſand devils to roam at large, and to preach publicly the doctrine of devils—than that we ſhould permit one ſuch impoſtor or monſter as Moſes—and the Bible prophets, to come with the pretended word of Gód in his mouth, and have credit among us.'* Now I aſk, if Mr. P. could eſtabliſh a government exactly to his mind, in any country, where men reſided, who reverenced the Bible prophets, and zealouſly preached the word of God, whether this his principle would allow him to tolerate them? Would he lay no reſtraints on men, whom he deemed ſuch miſchievous monſters, and vile impoſtors; and in caſe they would not be reſtrained from preaching, would not he inflict penalties? And if they continued obſtinate, would not their contumacy expoſe them to heavier puniſhment? And does not this principle ultimately lead to exterminating perſecution of all, who adhere to the Bible, under the ſtale pretence, that they diſturb the peace of the community?

I have indeed long avowed an expectation of perſecution; extenſive, dreadful perſecution of real Chriſtians, carried on by men, who now talk the moſt about toleration, candour, and liberality of ſentiment, and exclaim againſt the intolerance and bigotry of zealous believers: for they ſhew no *candour* to men ſtrenuouſly maintaining the doctrines of Calviniſm, or verging towards them; and the language of decided averſion and contempt, frequently uſed by them, does not render the thoughts of

* P. ii. p. 97.

of their obtaining power very pleaſant to a reflecting mind. Some declarations made by the late King of Pruſſia, concerning the difficulty he found in retaining Voltaire, and ſeveral others, within the bounds he preſcribed for them; certain recent publications of French philoſophers, atheiſts, and deiſts; and the ſtrong paſſage juſt quoted from Mr. P. tend to confirm this opinion: and it is a ſubject well worthy the attention of all who love the Bible and its doctrines, whatever ſentiments they may entertain on political ſubjects.

But at the ſame time, I avow an abhorrence of all perſecution; and would have no man abridged in his civil rights, on account of his religious principles, if in *other reſpects* he be a peaceable member of the community. The ſmalleſt degree of perſecution ſeems to me to contradict the *ſpirit of the goſpel*; nay all bitterneſs, contempt, or reviling in controverſy; and whatever is not neceſſary to defend the reader againſt the miſrepreſentations of a plauſible writer, and the deluſions to which he is expoſed. On this ſubject let every one recollect our Lord's words, "Woe be to the world becauſe of offences; for it muſt needs be that offences come; but woe to that man, by whom the offence cometh!" For the moſt plauſible argument in Mr. P's books is taken from that very miſconduct of Chriſtians, which our Lord expreſsly predicted.

Lay the things together which we have conſidered. Advert to man's need of revelation, and the reaſonableneſs of expecting one; the inconteſtable miracles, by which both the Old and New Teſta-

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ment were introduced; the prophecies contained in the ſcriptures, and their remarkable accompliſhments; the ſuitableneſs of Chriſtianity to our wants, and the diſtinct anſwers it gives to the moſt intereſting enquiries; its evident tendency, and actual effects; the ſublimity of its truths, and the beauty of its precepts; its exiſtence after ſo many ages, though it has been aſſaulted moſt vehemently from without, and diſgraced moſt ſhamefully within; and the wonderful agreement of our preſent copies with ancient verſions, though they have been handed down to us by Jews and Papiſts:—I ſay, take all theſe things together, and I cannot but think they amount to as full a demonſtration, as the ſubject admits of, that the Bible is the word of God.

I would now obſerve in concluſion, that a ſerious mind is the grand requiſite for obtaining ſatisfaction, in an enquiry of this nature. If the reader ſincerely deſires to be preſerved from miſtake, and directed into the way of truth; let him give the Bible itſelf an impartial and diligent inveſtigation. Let him act according to the dictates of his conſcience, without reſerve, while he waits for fuller information, let him uſe his underſtanding, and not be determined by his paſſions and prejudices. Let him aſk himſelf, whether he be as willing to be convinced the Bible is true, as the contrary? And if he be conſcious that he is not, let him honeſtly enquire after the cauſe of this prejudice. For if pride or love of forbidden objects bias his mind, an impartial verdict cannot be expected. Let no man, who would know the will of God, pay the leaſt regard to wit, ridicule, eloquent declamation, or virulent

rulent abuſe: theſe pleaſe corrupt nature, but they always tend to obſcure the truth, or confuſe and miſlead the mind. Finally, as the belief of a God is taken for granted by all parties; and as God muſt in all ſenſes be the fountain of knowledge and wiſdom; let every enquirer beg of him to ſtrengthen and aſſiſt his judgment, to keep his mind unbiaſſed, to enable him to diſtinguiſh truth from error, and to guide him in the path of everlaſting felicity.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 28 line 1, omit the word *not*,
29 3d line from bottom, for unweary, read *unwary*,
35 line 12, for "not unavoidable of, &c." read, *not of unavoidable, &c.*
36 line 8, omit the word *not*,
44 line 2, for forcibly, read *forcible*,
57 line 9, for deſtable, read *deteſtable*,
60 line 15, for enquiries, read *enquirers*,
71 line 12, from the bottom, for occupied, read, *copied*,
laſt line, for "well-convinced," read, *well-conceived*.

TO THE PUBLIC.

☞ *THE publiſher of this American edition of the foregoing work, knows not that he can better fill theſe remaining pages of the ſheet, than by inſerting a recommendation of books annexed to "The Chriſtian Remembrancer" lately publiſhed in Philadelphia. It is as follows; "We, take the liberty to recommend the following books, publiſhed in this country, to the eſteem and peruſal of our countrymen, both on patriotic and religious principles; and hope they will prove of eminent uſefulneſs to the pious of all denominations, who may be able to procure them."*

Beattie's Evidences of Religion, Boſton's Fourfold State, Doddridge's Riſe and Progreſs, —— Sermons on Religious Education, Dickinſon's Familiar Letters, Davies's Sermons, Edwards on Redemption, —— on the Freedom of the Will, —— on Original Sin, —— on the Religious Affections, Gib's Contemplations on the Covenants, Guthrie's Trial of a ſaving Intereſt in Chriſt, Hervey's Meditations, Newton's (Rector of St. Mary, London) Works, Oliphant's Sacramental Catechiſm, Shorter Catechiſm, explained by Fiſher and Erſkine, The Chriſtian Remembrancer, The Chriſtian Parent, Williſon on the Sabbath, —— Afflicted Man's Companion, —— Explanation of the Catechiſm.

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CATALOGUE, &c.

We would further beg leave to recommend a few of the practical writers, whose works have not yet been re-published here: Such as, Baxter's Saint's Rest: Abridged by Fawcet. Boston on the Covenant, Bennet's Christian Oratory, Bellamy's true Religion delineated, Brown's Metaphors, Durham's unsearchable Riches of Christ, Doddrige's ten Sermons on Regeneration, Flavel's Works, Hervey's Dialogues, Halyburton's Memoirs, —— great Concern, Jenks's Submission to the Righteousness of God, M'Laurin's Sermons, M'Ewen on the Types, Owen on Redemption, —— on the Glory of Christ, —— on Communion, —— on Prayer, —— on Indwelling Sin, —— on Spiritual Mindedness, Reynold's on Reconciliation, Scougal's Life of God in the Soul of Man, Willison's Sacramental Advices and Meditations, Witherspoon's Sermons and practical Essays.

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